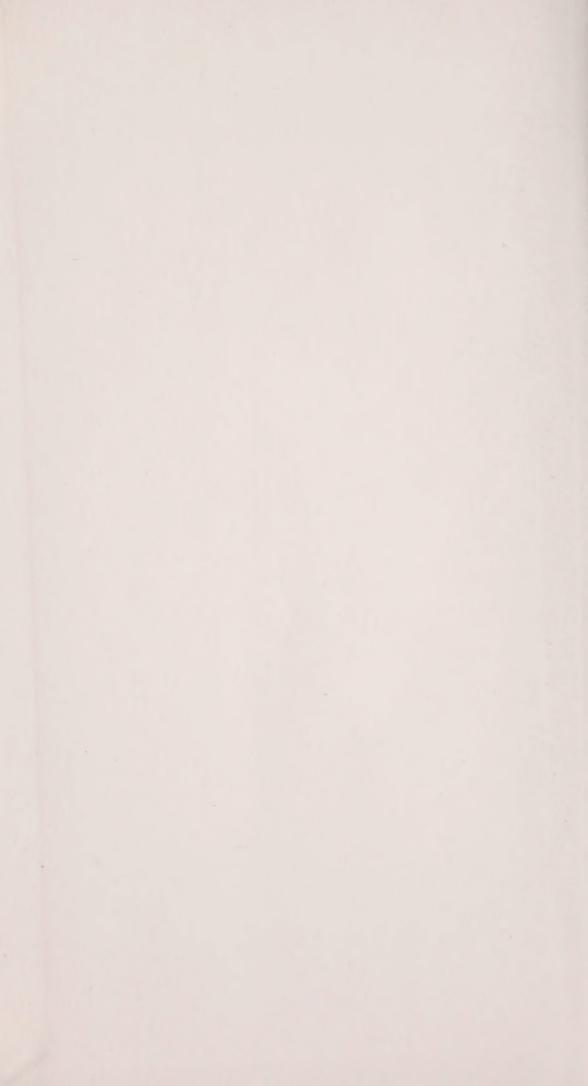


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ETTORE FIERAMOSCA,

OR THE

CHALLENGE OF BARLETTA,

AN

OF THE TIMES OF THE MEDICI,

MASSIMO D'AZEGLIO.



TRANSLATED FROM THE ITALIAN BY C. EDWARDS LESTER,

U. S. CONSUL AT GENOA—AUTHOR OF THE GLORY AND SHAME OF ENGLAND—MEMBER OF THE ATENEO ITALIANO AT FLORENCE—ETC. ETC.

NEWYORK:
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C. A. ALVORD, PRINTER, corner of John and Dutch Streets, NEW YORK.

DEDICATION

thought we should be hauny in the Great World-

GENERAL GEORGE P. MORRIS.

Dear General:

WHILE everybody else in "this land of noise, and steam, and trouble," has been toiling out life, Your business has been to live in society-Your pass-time has been with the Muses. You have thrown the soft light of Romance, and Song, over our working-day life in America. How many times, years ago, did the "MIRROR" come like a winged messenger of peace, and love, to our quiet homes in the still country! How many of those cheerful homes were more cheerful when it came! We used to go to the Village Post Office, Saturday evening, to get the "MIRROR," and then come home and tease our sisters-for we would read it first; and they would come and look over our shoulders, and beg us to let them take it just a minute to see Mr. Morris' last Song, and we would not give it up till we had read it, and then they would go off and thump away on the Piano-forte, just to tease us. Dear Sisters!some of them are care-worn Mothers, and some are Angels now.

It seems long ago—Those bright homes around which You have poured so much Romance, and such sweet Song—we've wandered away from them, and we thought we should be happy in the Great World——! And now when we are tired, and crazed, we wish we could go back again—We did go back, and we looked for the flowers, and they were dead—the old Songs, and the bright-eyed Sisters, and the Loved Ones, and "they were gone, all gone;" and we bowed over the ruins of the Altars of our early Love, and wept.

When I think of those deserted homes over the deep Sea, whose sad ruins still seem so beautiful, I think of You, and when the "New Mirror" comes I read Your Songs as I used to, and try to feel as You made me feel fifteen years ago. I wish I could pour some sun-light around a heart that has poured so much around mine. I'll try! You love a good Romance I know; I offer You the best in the Italian tongue. If You happen to while away an idle hour over these beautiful creations as gaily as I have many a one in trying to transfuse the bright Dreams of Italian Romance into the rude Speech of the North, I shall be well paid for my toil.

I commit this little messenger from the Land of Dante to the New World to Your keeping, and there is no one I would love to trust it with so well.

Faithfully yours,

C. EDWARDS LESTER.

Genoa Palazzo Lomellini, \
New Year's Evening, 1845.

CHALLENGE OF BARLETTA.

CHAPTER I.

AT the close of a beautiful day in April, 1503, the bell of St. Domenico, in Barletta, was sounding the last tocsins of the Ave-Maria. In the piazza on the shore of the sea which forms the rendezvous of the quiet inhabitants, particularly in the small towns of our southern climates, where they are accustomed to congregate and repose themselves from the fatigues of the day, were now assembled for the same purpose, in various groups, a large number of Spanish and Italian soldiers. Some of them were walking about, others were standing still or sitting down, and some were leaning over the boats drawn up along the beach; and, like the soldiery of every age and nation, they had something about them which seemed to say -the world is ours. In fact, the citizens themselves gave a tacit approval of their impudence by keeping at a distance, and giving up to them the best posts. One who fancies he figures to himself the appearance of this group by imagining a similar gathering of our modern soldiers, in their miserable uniform, would be sadly mistaken.

The army of Gonzales, especially his infantry, although perfectly equipped and the bravest in Christendom, knew no more than other soldiers of the 16th century of modern military discipline, which has at last succeeded in making every soldier just alike from head to foot. Here, on the contrary, every man who followed the profession of arms, either as a foot-soldier or cavalier, could equip and adorn himself as best suited his own fancy, and for this reason there was visible a wonderful

diversity in the trappings, colors, and bearing of this group, which made it an easy matter to tell the nation each one belonged to. There was the serious, immovable Spaniard, cold and arrogant, wrapped (embozados, as they say) in his national capa (cloak), below which fell the long and delicate blade of Toledo; and there was the loquacious and gesticulating Italian in his frock or doublet, with his bloody cutlass hung to his side.

When the bell struck, the noise ceased in the piazza, and nearly every head was uncovered; for in those times, even soldiers believed in God, and sometimes prayed to him. a short pause every hat was again replaced, and the hum once more began. Although the general aspect of this assemblage might have seemed at first sight gay and vivacious, it was, however, easy to discover among the different groups, that one common feeling of sadness and disquiet filled their minds, and formed the subject of their conversation. The object of this solicitude was, indeed, real and exciting. Famine had already begun to make itself felt among the soldiers, and even the inhabitants of Barletta, where the great captain had garrisoned his army, waiting the tardy arrival of reinforcements from Spain; for his troops were so inferior in numbers to the French, he feared to risk everything upon the fortune of a single engagement.

Three sides of the piazza were formed by the miserable habitations of fishermen and soldiers, the church, and the public inn. The fourth opened on the sea, and was strewn, according to the custom in such places, with boats, nets, and other fishing implements. On the distant verge of the horizon, rose up from the sea the dusky form of Mount Gargano, on whose lofty peak the last rays of the setting sun were dying away. Over the intervening space, a light vessel was slowly making her way, tacking every moment to catch the inconstant puffs of wind, which broke at intervals the bosom of the gulf. But the distance of the vessel, and the dimness of the twilight, rendered it impossible to tell her flag.

One of the Spaniards who stood in the midst of a group of soldiers near the beach, had his eyes fixed intently on the

distant rover, knitting his brows, and twisting his huge moustaches, which were verging from black to grey. "What art thou gazing on there statue-like, so fixed thou canst not turn an ear to one who speaks to thee?"

This outbreak of a Neapolitan soldier, who had received no answer to his first question, was intended to irritate the imperturbable Spaniard, but he was not the least disturbed -" Voto a Dios que nuestra Señora de Gaeta (God grant that our Lady of Gaeta) who sends fair wind and swift passage to so many who pray to her at sea, may now send this vessel to us, who pray to her on land, and have nothing to put between our teeth but the kicks of a blunderbuss!-Who knows but the craft brings grain and provisions to those French descomulgados (wretches), who have shut us up in this cage to die of famine * * * Y mala Pasqua me de Dios y sea la primera que viniere, si a su gracia el señor Gonzalo Hernandez (May God give me a bad Easter, and let it be the first too that comes, if I believe his Grace the Lord Gonzales Hernandes), after dining well and supping better, cares more for us than the leather he treads on."

"What can Gonzales do?" answered the passionate Neapolitan, glad of a chance to begin a dispute. "Ought he to turn himself into bread to stuff the belly of a beast like thee— When he has it, he divides it. And the unlucky ships that were driven on the shoals, who devoured their cargoes? Was it Gonzales or you?"

The Spaniard's countenance underwent a slight change, and he was just going to retort, but he was interrupted by one of the company, who, slapping him on the shoulder, shook his head and lowered his voice to give more weight to his words.

"Dost thou not remember, Nuño," he said, "that the steel of thy pike was within three fingers of the breast of Gonzales, at Taranto, the day that strange trick was played off on us to pay us for old scores. * * * And if there ever was a day I believed thy neck would scrape acquaintance with the halter, that was the day. * * * Dost thou remember how many tricks thou tried'st to scare the lion? Canst thou hurl that old tower from the castle (pointing to the tower that lifted itself

over the town)? Just as easily as Gonzales, who all cold, cold * * it seems to me, I see him this minute with his hairy hand parrying the steel, as he told thee, mira que sin querer no me hieras * * * (beware, lest thou wound me without design)."

At this moment the brown face of the old soldier looked darker than ever, and to break up a conversation which seemed little to his liking, he cut off the reply of the Neapolitan by saying, "What care I for Taranto, a pike, or Gonzales?"—" What carest thou?" answered the first speaker, smiling. "If thou wishest to give an ear to Ruy Perez, and keep thy breadpassage safe till God sends us something to eat, speak not loud enough for Gonzales to hear thee, and remember Taranto. Half a word is too little, and a whole one too much, says the

Italian proverb, and a man warned is half saved."

Nuño muttered indistinctly something in reply, which seemed to have little to do with his thoughts; for the hint he had received set him to thinking in spite of himself, and he turned a suspicious look around to see if any one was likely to take up his rash words. A single glance seemed to satisfy him; he had luckily done no mischief.

The piazza in the mean time was nearly deserted. The hour of night sounded out from the castle, and the group we left on the beach followed the crowd, and dispersed through the narrow, dark lanes of the city.

"Diego Garcia will come back to-night," said Ruy Perez, as they walked along: "the good lances of his Third have found in the country game for the chase, and who knows but tomorrow we'll dine better than we sup to-night!"

The thoughts excited by this hope, stopped all further discourse, and each one returned in silence to his own habitation.

While this conversation was going on, the vessel which had seemed at first to be passing by in its voyage, was now slowly approaching the shore. A boat was lowered from her sides, and two men entered it, and hastily pulled for the beach. They had no sooner made a landing, than the vessel from which they came, shifted her sails, went on her course, and was seen

no more. The boat drew up on the obscurest side of the piazza, and the two oarsmen stepped ashore.

Perceiving no one around the place, the first of the strangers stopped to wait for his attendant who remained behind to take a portmanteau, and something else, from the boat; after which he drew it up to the head of a small mole which served as a landing-place to larger craft, and then rejoined his companion, whose bearing had an air of superiority, which indicated an inequality in their persons. He addressed him a word, which seemed to be the conclusion of their conversation during their passage to the shore.

"Michael, the time has come to be on the guard. Thou

knowest who I am. I'll say no more."

Michael, who understood very well the force of these few syllables, nodded his head in acquiescence, and they passed on together to the inn.

Before the principal door of the house were several small pillars of rough brick which supported a portico, under which were placed a number of tables for the accommodation of guests. The name of the host was Baccio da Rieti; but the people, who had some suspicions against him, had dubbed him Veleno (poison), and this was the title by which he was generally known. He had caused to be painted between the two windows a large red sun, which the painter, according to certain astronomical notions not yet extinct, had represented with eyes, nose and mouth, the whole encircled by rays of the color of gold, in the form of the tail of a swallow, which could be seen in the day-time from the distance of a mile. The house was divided into two stories. The first served for a kitchen and dining-room. A flight of wooden stairs conducted to the second, inhabited by the host and his family, and any unlucky customer chance brought there for the night. It was the common custom in Italy, in those times, to sup at seven o'clock; but at this hour there were only a few soldiers and petty officers, who were sitting before the door in the fresh air. They belonged to the company of Prospero Colonna, who then followed the fortunes of Spain. They were all daring young men, and were in the habit of assembling here with the other bold spirits of the army. The host, who understood his business, took good care they lacked neither cards nor wine, and being well spiced with fun himself, he knew pretty well how to take money out of the pockets of his guests by keeping them in good humor.

Veleno happened just at this moment to be standing square in the door, fanning himself with his cap, his apron gathered up on one side, and the jokes, the laughter and the noise, went up to the stars.

The two strangers arrived; but in order not to appear such, they walked leisurely along, stopping frequently to converse with each other, and when they came up in front of the door, the light within which fell upon them, revealed nothing in their dress to distinguish them from ordinary guests. They took no notice of any one in the assemblage when they entered the inn, if we except a single person who was seated apart. He was in a position to observe them closely, and starting up suddenly he could not suppress an exclamation of extreme surprise—"the Duke" * * * The manner in which this word was pronounced, plainly showed it was to have been followed by a name; but a withering glance from one of the passing strangers, was enough to drive this name down the throat of the soldier who spoke. No one had appeared to pay much attention to his surprise. One of his companions simply said:

"Boscherino! what Duke art thou dreaming about? I've not seen thee drink to-day. Seems this to thee a place for Dukes?" Boscherino could hardly believe his exclamation had made so slight an impression, or that he should be esteemed either a sot, or out of his head; he therefore gave an artful turn to the conversation, and resumed the thread of their former discourse.

Close behind the two strangers came the host Veleno, with his fat slovenly person, his wax, olive complexion, his bearded, malicious face, in which appeared a mixture of the Coviello and the assassin. Without very much disconcerting himself he lifted his cap and said, "Command me, Signori."

The man we have already called Michael replied:—" Prepare supper."

The host put on a long face, and answered in a sorrowful

tone, affecting an air of sincerity, "Supper? You mean to say a mouthful, I suppose, if we can scrape it together. God only knows what this close siege has left us. Why, the loaf of bread, that used to cost a cortonese, now costs half a florin, and that's what I pay to the bakers. But at all events, gentlemen of your cloth will be sure to pay, so I'll do my best;" and with this exordium, intended, like all host's speeches, to make his guests pay just five times as much as their fare is worth, he opened a closet, and taking out a frying-pan, placed it on the furnace. By the help of a wind raised by his apron, which puffed up the ashes to suffocation, a piece of a kid was soon warmed, which, if the word of the host could be taken, was the only fragment of meat at that moment in Barletta, and had been reserved for a certain corporal, who was expected to arrive every moment. "But guests of such a description were not to be sent to bed on empty stomachs."

However this may have been, the viand was cooked, and came on the table in an earthen dish, ornamented with flowers, accompanied by a jug of the same material with a large mouth, and half a goat's cheese, as hard as a stone, on which the impressions of the knives of many a former customer who had made their experiments, were clearly visible. The table at which they sat, stood at the bottom of the dining hall, if we may apply such an epithet to this smoky den. On the opposite side, there was a large fire-place with a mantelpiece supported by twelve figures, with three or four ovens on either side. Before this stood the cook's table, from the centre of which a huge table extended in the form of the letter T nearly the length of the room, to the opposite wall where our two guests were supping. From the centre beam of the ceiling hung a four sided brazen lantern, whose nearly spent flame cast just light enough to keep the guests from breaking their shins against the benches and stools scattered around.

Having provided everything necessary for the supper, the host returned to the door, whistling as usual, and just at that moment a man came dashing up on a mule, and leaped to the ground crying out, "Courage, boys, cheer up—good news for you; and thou too, Veleno, multiply thyself by twenty and

there will yet be enough for all. Diego Garcia has come back with his cavalcade, and in a moment will be here for supper. He'll have with him twenty or five-and-twenty good lances, and he alone counts for four—so thou mayest obey orders, and quick too—Well, * * * what now? Dead art thou? Come, stir thyself."

The host stood with his mouth wide open; and the bravi jumped up and gathered round the messenger to question him

about the luck of the hunting party.

"You'll kill me," roared out the new comer, pushing them aside and tearing himself from the crowd—" and you'll get nothing out of me by it either. If you want to know anything shut your mouths"—

"Speak then, speak," they all cried together: "what news have we?"

"My news is, that this very minute we have come back tired to death, and after being fourteen hours on horseback without a drop of water (Hey! there, Veleno, a mug of your best-cold-my throat is as dry as a tinder-box). But forty head of large beasts and seventy half-scores of small ones are already in Barletta; and three men-at-arms taken, who, God willing, will shell out as many fine gold ducats as we are baptized Christians if they ever get another look at their own thresholds. I tell you it was no easy trick to unhorse them and get away their swords. (Art thou coming with that wine before I choke to death?) We came down on them like thunderbolts, hand to hand. One of them was unhorsed, and his wounded charger had him under his feet. They all cried out, surrender or thou art a dead man. He jumped to his feet, and dealt out some heavy blows with his huge sword; and had he not shivered the blade by a stroke levelled at Inigo's horse, which fell upon the iron pommel of his saddle, we should have been obliged to finish him with our lances to prevent his escape. But he finally gave up to Diego Garcia the rest of his sword he still held in his hand."

Veleno now came with his liquor, and turned out a draught for the narrator, who said to him, "God bless thee, man—why, thou hast come at last!" "And what is this demon's name?" asked Boscherino.

"I can't tell—they say he's a grand French baron, with a name that sounds like La Cratte * * la * * La Motte—yes, now I remember—yes—La Motte, a grand beast, you see, that makes the earth tremble. Any way, the affair is well ended, and we'll be merry if God will." Then turning a glance in upon the house, he cried out—"What art thou doing there, traitor, poltroon? Nothing on the fire yet! Shall I take the measure of thy shoulders with this lance?"

And the fellow had already entered the inn to execute his threat; but he stopped when he saw a large pot had already been put over a pile of oak, which began to kindle and crack; while the host, heated to a perspiration, had banished all thought of famine and siege, and set himself busily at work to put things in order, well knowing that Paredes and his companions were not to be trifled with. He had found in a flash something to make a soup, and flaying a kid, he put a portion of it in the pot to boil, while the rest he run upon two long spits and set them to roasting. Things seemed now to be making some progress.

"Well done!" said the man who had ordered the supper; "well for the Veleno! Had they come and found things out of order, thou wouldst have felt the weight of the five fingers of Diego Garcia. I'll go now and send them here in no

time."

"But Ramazzotto will not be here with them?" asked one of

the corporals.

"How can I come? The company is yet on horseback; I must see them lodged and keep an eye on the booty in the piazza of the castle, and thou knowest that these hands can't be idle to-night, for there's one who knows how to keep them busy. Fieramosca, Miale, Brancaleone, and all our company are on guard, and we are to see no disturbance takes place to the Spaniards another time, let it cut where it may."

"If this be as thou sayest," rejoined Boscherino, "we'll come and help thee. Come on, comrades, with good will; this brave fellow has more miles in his body than we without sleep-

ing, and we must help him." These words brought them all from the inn, and they started off together, talking about the broils of the day, till they reached the spot where the company of Ramazzotto was waiting for him. The latter, reining in his horse, rode on slowly, telling stories and answering questions, and Boscherino was following on behind, all absorbed in what the other was saying, when he felt a sudden jerk of his cloak. Turning round, he saw in the shadow a man whom he recognized as one of the two he left supping at the inn.

"Boscherino," he said in an under voice, stopping him while the rest went on, "the Duke would speak with thee; fear not, for he would do thee no harm: but be on thy guard and take care what thou doest—come on."

These words sent Boscherino's blood through his veins with the heat of a fever, and in a voice scarcely audible he inquired, "Are you D. Michele?"

"Yes, I am; keep the secret and play the man."

Boscherino had been a Capo Squadra of Signor Gio Pagolo Baglioni, and of several other Italian lords. He had always behaved valiantly through all the wars of the times, and no man in battle was more reckless of danger. He had gathered a troop of five hundred infantry and one hundred arquebusers, under a commission from Signor Prospero, and marched to the relief of Gonzales, who had given him a generous stipend, and treated him with the utmost confidence.

But great as was his courage, he quailed under the terrible words of D. Michele; he well knew before whom he would be obliged in a few moments to stand, and in spite of himself, his knees shook with terror. Could he have had his own choice, he would gladly have gone to the field alone against ten of the bravest lances, rather than undergo this meeting. Reflecting on what had passed, the truth soon flashed on him.

"I'm but too certain," said he to himself, "he heard my exclamation, the Duke. * * The infernal devil himself moved my tongue—but yet I was in a distant part of the room, and it seems to me I did not raise my voice much. But what will not that villain, scoundrel, yet do, and what damnable deed has brought him here?"

Such were his thoughts as the two took their way back to the inn. Nobody but the people of the house were left in the kitchen, for the Duke had gone to his chamber, which was over the eating-room, and the planks of the floor were so filled with cracks that everything could be seen and heard which took place below.

The host had more than suspected his guest was not what he appeared to be, but being closely besieged by the enemy on land, all kinds of visitors came to the town by sea, and he disturbed himself very little, although now and then some one happened along of a different stamp from his ordinary guests.

D. Michele and Boscherino mounted the stair-case and entered the Duke's room. A bed covered with a brown spread; a small table, and a few chairs, made up the furniture of the chamber. The lantern which burned dimly, was utterly extinguished by the draught which came in from the door as it opened, and while D. Michele went below for another light, Boscherino was left alone with the Duke. He remained immovably fixed against the wall, afraid to speak, or even to breathe, but ashamed withal to find himself petrified with dread, when but a few moments before he did not fear a man in the world. But the consciousness of being in the presence of that strange, terrible man, and feeling he was so near, he might hear in the silence his rapid breathing, sent, in spite of himself, such a chill of horror through his whole frame, that he wished he was dead. D. Michele returned with a light, and the Duke was sitting on the side of the bed. His presence was that of a man who had never known what was repose, either of body or soul. He was well formed, but lean and sinewy, only slightly above an ordinary stature, and he showed a kind of nervousness in every movement, which could not be described. He was dressed in a dark mantle, with slashed sleeves gathered up in large folds. A slender dagger was sheathed in his belt, and his sword lay upon the table, with a hat adorned with a single black plume. His hands were gloved, and his feet dressed in large travelling boots. He turned upon the two his pallid face. His cheeks were hollow,

and covered with livid spots; his moustache was sandy, and his beard hung down, divided upon his breast. But his glance was like nothing else in the world. At will, his eve became more venomous than a serpent's, sweeter than a young child's, or more terrible than the bloody pupil of the hyena.

He cast a mild and encouraging look upon Boscherino, who had shrunk into half his size, still standing in the same spot, as if awaiting the sentence of death; but Boscherino knew the

man who spoke to him, and he felt no assurance.

"I have been recognized by thee, Boscherino," he said, " and I am glad. I always had thee for a brave and a faithful man. and had'st thou not seen me, I would have sought thee out. I well knew thou wert here. Tell no one thou hast seen me. Thou knowest I can reward thy services, nor will it improve thy prospects much, to excite my displeasure."

The Capo Squadra knew he spoke the truth, and he replied: "Your Excellency can dispose of me at your pleasure, and I will be, as I have always been, your faithful servant. I believe what I say is confirmed by my past life. I only pray your Excellency to deign to suffer me to speak a few words

with liberty."

The Duke nodded his assent, and he continued:

"You have, illustrious Signore, my word of honor, which cannot be broken. But some one may have seen you. If your secret is divulged, and I leave this room, the blame might fall

unjustly on my shoulders."

"Go," replied the Duke, " and fear nothing-prove thyself a man of honor, and fear no blame from me so long as thou dost not merit it. I only wish my presence here to be kept secret a few hours; then the whole world may know it, and say what they please. But as thou prizest my favor, let not the secret pass thy mouth."

Boscherino made no reply to these words. He bowed his head with reverence, showing by his manner that sort of a readiness to obey his master, which indicated no other uneasiness than a fear of not being esteemed sufficiently obedient.

He took his leave, and bowed himself out of the room, where he seemed to have been a thousand years. After some minutes, D. Michele also came out, and went to the room assigned him, and the upper story of the inn for the rest of that night remained as quiet as though it were uninhabited.

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CHAPTER II.

and the apper story of the impater the rest of that night se-

The company for whom supper had been prepared reached the house of Veleno about two o'clock at night, and in a single moment they filled the grand room, where the table was laid. The host, jealous of his honor, had made out to embellish his table with clean white linen, and besides dishes and plates of silver and copper, which were unusually bright, because they had been scoured with greater diligence, there were scattered here and there over the table vine leaves, for the bottles and goblets to stand on, and a thousand drops of water were glittering on their sides, under the light of the lamps, giving good testimony of their having been newly rinsed. Diego Garcia di Paredes entered first, and was followed by the French barons, Jacques de Guignes, Girant de Forses and La Motte, his prisoners. The Spaniard, the boldest and most powerful man in the army, and perhaps in all Europe, seemed formed by nature expressly for the profession of arms, where success used to depend almost entirely upon robustness and muscular strength. His stature towered over his companions, and constant exposure, which cuts away the fat from the limbs in such a temperament, had given so enormous a size to every muscle that appeared in his breast and shoulders, and throughout his entire body, that he seemed to resemble the colossal forms of ancient sculpture-for he was athletic, and at the same time beautifully proportioned. His neck, thick like a bull's, wielded a small head with curly hair, which grew high up behind his ears; and his countenance was manly and bold, but without a shade of arrogance. The aspect of D. Garcia was not wanting in a certain grace, and there could be read in his countenance a frank soul, loyal and full of honor, He had already

laid aside his armor, and now appeared in his tight fitting dress of skin, which made the very form of his muscles as clearly visible at every movement, as though they had been naked. A short Spanish mantle thrown across his shoulders, completed his simple dress.

"Signori Barons," said he, ushering in the prisoners with knightly courtesy, "we Spaniards have a saying, duelos con pan son menos (troubles are more tolerable where there's plenty to eat). Fortune has frowned on you to-day—to-morrow perhaps she may frown on us—but in the mean time we are friends here; let us sup now in the name of God; for in this we shall all be agreed. More than one lance has gone to pieces, and that will answer for to-day, and there is no danger for the future we shall let our armor rust. Be of good cheer then, and to-morrow will show you, when we negotiate for your ransom, that D. Garcia knows how to treat honorably a noble cavalier."

The countenance of La Motte showed the ire he could not conceal. He was a valiant soldier, impetuous in the onset of battle, and his aspect was equal to his courage; but he was the proudest man in the world, and could not brook courtesy from one who had made him a prisoner. But conscious of the meanness of showing his disdain, he bridled his passion, and replied as mildly as he could—

"If your hand is as light in imposing a ransom as in striking a transhant blow, his most Christian Majesty will draw on his own purse if he requires our services again, or I shall keep

you company the rest of my days."

"Inigo," said Peredes, turning to a fine-looking young man of five-and-twenty, who, impatient for supper, had already laid his hand upon the bread, "if we must talk about strokes of the blade we shall have to ask your horse how he relishes the cuts of this Baron;" and then directing his discourse to La Motte—

"I bethink myself a little too late that you are disarmed: Here is my sword;" and taking it from his side he bound it upon the prisoner. "It would be a shame that an arm like yours should not find some true blade to rest on. You will tread

Barletta for a prison till the day of ransom or exchange of prisoners. Your parole d' honneur, Sir Knight."

La Motte extended his right hand to Peredes, who grasped it, and added, "Your companions are bound by the same obligation; is it not so?" And as he said this he turned to Correa and Azevedo, two men at-arms, who had captured the companion of La Motte. They signified their acquiescence, and with the same courtesy both took their swords from their sides, and buckled them to the waists of the French Barons.

"Supper, Signori!" cried out Veleno at this moment, bringing upon the table a large earthen dish, which held one half of the kid in a bed of onions and pulse; and two other deep plates of salad he placed on the ends of the board. The sight of the smoking viands was no less potent than the call of the host to assemble the half famished company around the table. Stools were hastily drawn up. In a single moment they were all seated and at work, and for several minutes not a sound was heard but the clattering of knives, forks, dishes and goblets.

Diego Garcia was seated at the head of the table, with La Motte on one side and De Guignes on the other. He laid his large dagger upon the dish, and the animal was soon cut to pieces and divided among the guests. His own iron stomach, served by two rows of strong teeth of incomparable whiteness, was soon appeased if not satisfied. He left not a bone on his plate, for no mastiff could pride himself on his ability to reduce them to powder quicker than he. When he had finished his plate, he filled the goblets of his guests on the right and left, and then his own. These were soon turned off; and their voracious appetites being somewhat appeased, conversation gradually revived, made up of questions, answers, and retorts, on the engagements, the horses, the blows, and in a single word, all the incidents of the day. At the foot of the table, surrounded by more than twenty Spaniards, who had courteously resigned to their leader, and the prisoners, what they called the cabecera (the head of the table), there was visible a certain fraternal intimacy in every act and word, which is begotten only by a frequent and common exposure to the greatest

dangers, where men learn to prize the promptness which is always ready to aid in the moment of peril.

The weather-beaten, sun-burnt faces of these soldiers, inflamed still more by the excitement of the goblet, and the fatigue of the day, produced an effect of *chiaro scuro*, as the lamps shone full upon them, worthy of the pencil of Gherardo delle Notti.

As supper drew to a close, conversation as usual became more general, and the glad laugh went up noisily from the gay company, who had come off with profit and with honor from the martial struggles of the day. The forehead of Inigo was the only one around that board from which every mark of fatigue had not passed away. He sat with his elbow resting on the table, looking around the circle, but making little or no reply to the sallies of his companions.

"Inigo," said Azevedo, extending towards him his hand, after having drank a glass more than usual, for he was a gay fellow, and hated the very shadow of melancholy on the brow of his companions. "Inigo, one would swear thou wert in love, if the women of Barletta could merit the glances of so handsome a youth. But, here, thank God, we are safe—and I pray thou mayest not have left thy heart in Spain, or at Naples."

"I am not thinking of the women, Azevedo," replied the youth, "but of the good steed that Baron fell upon, and nearly killed like a madman, when he saw he could not escape from us. Poor Castaño! his shoulder is lost, I fear, and never shall I mount his equal. Dost thou remember what the noble fellow did at Taranto, when he forded that river, * * I don't remember the name, * * * when Quinones was killed, and the water was deeper than we expected; who was the first to reach the bank? And after so many trials, and so many dangers, to think he must end his life at the hands of this enemy of God!!"

"But raise not thy voice so," interposed Correa. "It was all done in fair fight. We must be civil to our prisoners,

nor must they hear such words."

"And I swear to thee," rejoined Inigo, "I would fall wounded on the field, could I see my poor Castaño sound again. I would have pardoned the Frenchman, had he broken his sword over my head, instead of choosing the head of my horse. Man to man we strike—at least such is the play of every man who knows how to wield a blade, and not at random like the blows of a madman. Cursed fellow! He seemed to be hunting about to kill flies instead of warriors."

"Thou art right by heaven," cried out Segredo, an old soldier with moustache and beard which showed he had seen more than one fight, "when I was of thy age, I felt like thee; look at my forehead," said he, slapping it lightly with a hand covered with an iron gauntlet, and showing a horizontal scar that extended over his eye-brow. "This I got from El Rey Chico, for my love for the most beautiful bay charger in the camp. Ah! he could be called a horse! When we made a charge in battle I had only to slack his rein a bit thus, and touch him with the spur, and what would you see? He reared on his quarters and shot forward, and on my word, I tell you I could only keep myself from shooting over his head by pressing my legs against his sides. And when my good sword fell with his plunge, it was like the bolt of God, and it sent more than one Moor to sup with Satan. And the Siesta; why! I always slept under the shadow of his body, between his legs, poor Zamoreno de mi alma, and he was even afraid to switch away the flies for fear of disturbing me. At the siege of Carthagena, where few of you could have been, and where the Great Captain began to make himself known-and Segredo, can tell you war was a good trade then-a little better than now, at any rate; fighting under the very eyes of king Don Ferdinand, and of the Queen Isabella, who was beauty itself, and of all the Court, and well paid and kept, with our horses, as though we had been in the palace of a Prince. But to go on about my horse. In an engagement where the Rey Chico fought like a lion in the front rank of his men (he was a man who would not have reached to my breast, but he had an arm which left a mark where it fell), that poor animal was pierced through and through the neck with a Moorish lance, and for the first time in his life, fell on his knees. I leaped to the ground, and saw there was no help; but I hoped to lead him by the bridle to the camp, for I would not have abandoned him for the world. He followed me till his legs could no longer bear him up, and I'm not ashamed to say it, the hot tears fell down upon my breast-plate and bathed my neck, and I never knew before what it was to weep. Just then a squadron of Moors who had been pressed hard by our men-at-arms, turned back and came rushing by with their king ahead, bellowing like a bull. I found myself surrounded by the flying troop, alone and unhorsed, and I saw I was gone. I parried the blows which fell thick around me, till the blade of the king split open my helmet, and I fell to the ground and was left for dead. When I came to, and could raise myself up, I found my poor Zamoreno stretched dead by my side."

The sad fate of Segredo's steed was listened to with compassionate interest by the entire company, and when the old soldier finished his story, he could not but betray upon his time-furrowed countenance, that the memory of his faithful companion still lived green in his heart. He felt mortified that his weakness had been discovered, and he turned to his goblet to divert the steady looks of the company.

Jacques de Guignes, who had, with the rest of his fellow-prisoners, become a little cheerful as he went on filling his stomach,

heard the history of Zamoreno, and then began:-

"Chez nous, Mons. le Cavalier, this would not have so easily happened, although it's too true les bonnes coutumes de chevalerie are being corrupted every day. However, a man-at-arms would consider himself dishonored if against equal odds he should deal a blow upon the horse of his enemy. But such courtesy, as everybody knows, is not to be expected from the Moors."

"And yet," replied Inigo to the speech which was not directed towards him, "it would be no difficult matter to show that the custom of butchering horses is not confined exclusively to the Moors. Witness the plains of Benevento, and the noble Manfredi; and Charles of Anjou who gave the order was no more Moor than you or me."

The thrust was well directed, and it made the Frenchman writhe.

"So the story goes, and it may be true; but Charles of Anjou was fighting for a kingdom with an excommunicated enemy of the Church for a rival."

"Yes, but a rival who was fighting to protect his own, and

not to rob," interrupted Inigo, with a bitter smile.

"I hope you are not ignorant," said La Motte, taking up the dispute, "that the realm of Naples is a fief of the Holy See, and Charles was invested with it by the Pontiff; and besides, the right of a valiant sword is something."

"But yet * * but yet * * let us take matters as they are," replied Inigo. "The bearded Germans of Manfredi, and the thousand Italian cavaliers led on by Count Giordano, who fought against the French, gave pretty good testimony from the moment the battle began, that Charles of Anjou thought it might help him a little in making himself king of Naples, to resort to this expedient, in spite of les bonnes coutumes de chevalcrie so rife in these times."

"I concede to you if you like," rejoined La Motte, "that the Germans are worth something under their mail, and were able to withstand, for a few charges, the French Gendarmerie, on the bloody day of Benevento. But as for your thousand Italians; really! if two hundred years ago, they were such as we find them in our days, the French had very little need for wasting their time in killing their poor horses to put their riders to flight. During the five years I've been roaming over Italy, I have learned to know them well. I have followed king Charles under the banner of the preux Louis d'Ars, and I assure you the treachery of the Italians has given us more trouble than their swords,—the only war they practise, and the only one French loyalty discards."

These inflated words were not much relished by any of the party, and least of all by Inigo, a youth endowed with a rare genius and culture. He was a friend of many of the Italians who fought under the banners of Spain, and knew the history of Charles' invasion of Italy. He knew (to cite a single case) how the French, in spite of their loyalty, had kept their treaty with the Florentines by stirring up the rebellion in Pisa. He knew, too, that the fortresses imprudently entrusted to their

keeping by Pietro de Medici, under the sacredness of a treaty, had not been restored at the stipulated time. All this now flashed on his memory, and the words of La Motte roused all his indignation. He could not brook to hear the unfortunate Italians, who had been betrayed and insulted by Frenchmen, now vituperated by these same traitors. He was just ready to give vent to his ire, but the Baron, who said he had been stung by his words, cut off his reply.

"You have but recently arrived from Spain, Signori, and as yet know not this vagabond Italian race. You have not yet had to deal with the Duke Ludovico, nor with the Pontiff, nor with Valentino (Cæsar Borgia), who first receive you with open arms, and then wait their chance to tear out your vitals. But Fornovo showed what a handful of brave men can do against a cloud of traitors, and the Moor himself was the first one taken in his own snares. Villain! if he had no crime to weigh down his soul but the murder of his nephew, that alone would brand him the most infamous of assassins."

"But," said Correa, "his nephew was sickly, and hadn't common sense, and it may easily be believed he died a natural death."

"A natural death! Yes, a death just as natural as all die who have poison given to them. De Forses and de Guignes know something of this business, as well as myself, for we were all lodged in the castle of Pavia. The King went to visit the wretched family of Galeazzo, and I learn all this from the mouths of Filippo de Comines, who received it from the lips of the King himself. The Moor led him through certain dark passages, till they came to two low damp rooms, which looked out on the ditches around the castle, and here he found the Duke of Milan, with his wife Isabella, and their children. The mother threw herself at the feet of the King, imploring him to save her father, and would have prayed him for herself and her husband, but that traitor Moor was present. Galeazzo, pallid and emaciated, said little, but seemed overwhelmed and stupefied by the enormity of his misfortune; the poison which killed him was that very hour working in his veins. * * * And there is Cesar Borgia, to cite another;

where will you find a match to this couple? We have witnessed two deeds which would not be believed when related, and besides, many other of his doings are sufficiently known. All the world know how he managed to make himself master of Romagna. All the world know he has assassinated his brother-in-law, poisoned Cardinals, Bishops, and hosts of others who stood in his way." And then turning to his countrymen, with the air of a man who is going to relate a deed well known, and one which will inspire compassion, he continued, "Poor Ginevra de Monreale! The most beautiful, virtuous, and amiable woman I ever knew! My companions here remember her-we saw her in our passage to Rome in '92. Her evil destiny made her known to Duke Valentino, who was already Cardinal. She had been forced by her father into a marriage with one of our officers. She was seized with a malady none could understand-every remedy was resorted to, but all in vain-she seemed fated to die. But a strange accident revealed to me a hellish secret, known to but few. Her malady was nothing more nor less than poison given to her by Valentino, in revenge for her unconquerable virtue. Poor creature-Are not these crimes to call down the bolts of Heaven?"

Here the Frenchman stopped, and seemed to be trying to recall some circumstance time had obliterated from his memory.

"But—yes, I'm not mistaken. To-day, in coming to Barletta, I saw among your men-at-arms one whose name has escaped me, whom I remember very well to have met often in Rome at that period, for his form and countenance are not easily forgotten. It was rumored he was the secret lover of Ginevra, and after her death he disappeared, and no one has heard of him since." Turning to his companions, he said, "When we stopped at the fountain, a mile from the city, to wait for the infantry to come up, that pale young man, with his chestnut hair and the most beautiful and the saddest face I ever beheld,—yes—yes—it's him without a question—but if I should die, I can't tell his name."

The Spaniards looked at him inquiringly, curious to know of whom he spoke, "Was he an Italian?" asked one.

"Yes! Italian. It's true he did not open his lips, but a companion who dismounted from his horse and handed him water, spoke to him in Italian—"

"And his arms ?—"

"It seems to me he wore a polished cuirass, with a coat of mail, and if I mistake not, a plume and a scarf of blue."

Inigo was the first to cry out, "Ettore Fieramosca."

"Fieramosca exactly," answered La Motte, "now I remember-Fieramosca. Well, this Fieramosca was enamored of Ginevra (at least so said rumor), and not being seen after her

death, every one supposed he had killed himself."

When they heard these words, the Spaniards remarked among themselves, that this explained the mystery of his deep melancholy, and his always keeping himself retired from young soldiers of his own rank. But all joined in praising his generous nature, his valor, his courtesy, which gave some indication of the love borne to him by the whole army. Above all, Inigo, who was his friend, and like every generous mind, admired without jealousy the noble characteristics of the Italian soldier, and loved them the more, the more he knew them, took up the discourse, and spoke in his praise with all the ardor that burns in the friendship of a Spanish heart.

"You admire his face and who would not? But what does beauty avail a man? If you but knew the soul of the youththe nobility, the greatness of his heart. All he has dared in battle with invincible courage, sword in hand, which in most cases is attended by a kind of desperation, is in him even in the hour of deepest peril always tempered by a steady coolness. During my life I have known many a brave youth at the Courts of France and of Spain, but on the word of a knight, I tell you the equal of this Italian, who by Heaven unites everything in himself, I have never found and never expect to."

The admiration Fieramosca commanded throughout the army was such, every one strove to be foremost in his praises, nor did the old Segredo prove himself less enthusiastic than the rest.

"Although," said he, "I never had time to throw away upon the women, and never understood how a mail-covered heart could be tormented about them, yet that brave youth, to see him always so sad, with that gloomy face, stirs up in me a kind of feeling which I can hardly understand myself, and, por Dios santo, I have not a horse except Pardo I would not part with

see him give one good hearty laugh."

"I said it was disappointment in love!" exclaimed Azevedo. "When you see a young man pale, taciturn and fond of solitude, there's no mistake it's an affair of a petticoat. However, it's true (said he smiling), that sometimes a few games that ruin one's sequins make the owner's cup bitter, and himself as pale and melancholy as half a score of petticoats-but as for this, it's quite a different affair and don't last as long. And as for Fieramosca, there's no danger to him on this score. I never saw him with a card in his hand. Now I understand the secret of his nocturnal wanderings. My windows, you know, look out on the mole. More than once have I seen him, late at night, get into a boat alone, and pull off and shoot round behind the castle. Pleasant voyage, says I, getting into bed, every one to his liking. I suppose he was on some love-trip, but I never dreamed he went out in the sea to weep over one who was in the other world. It seems impossible such a soldier should give himself up to the control of such nonsense!"

"This proves," retorted Inigo with warmth, "that a kind and loving heart may beat in the breast of a man who can look boldly into the face of an enemy; and blessed be God that in this, justice is rendered to Fieramosca, and to all the Italians who follow the standard of Colonna. Not a knight with a sword at his side, and a lance in rest, can boast of bearing them

more bravely than he."

To this encomium, poured out with all the enthusiasm of an open and truth-loving soul, the Spaniards signified by words and gestures the approbation they could not withhold, for they were daily spectators of the bravery of the Italian knights. But not so with the three prisoners, irritated by the conversation and heated by wine. La Motte, particularly, who had been receiving the thrusts of Inigo throughout the entire

evening, could not bend his proud spirit to esteem anything equal to himself and his companions. To the words, therefore, of the Spaniard, he replied with a studied sneer and a contemptuous look which made the blood of the fiery young soldier mount to his hair, and his indignation was more deeply roused as La Motte went on—

"On this point, Mons, le Cavalier, neither I nor my companions are of your opinion. For many years we have borne arms in Italy, and as I have already hinted, we have much oftener seen stilettoes and poison resorted to than lances and swords, and I beg you to believe it, a French gendarme (contorting his face grotesquely) would be ashamed to make a man groom of his stable, who had no more bravery than one of these Italian poltroons. And yet such are the villains you compare with us!!"

"Listen, Sir Knight, and keep your ears wide-open," retorted Inigo, who could no longer restrain his passion when he heard such villany charged on his friends, and was waiting for a good chance to vent his rage on him for killing his horse. "Were one of our Italians here, and above all, Fieramosca, and you who are a prisoner of Garcia, were only free, you would have occasion to learn, before going to bed to-night, that a French knight would have good use for both his hands to save his skin from the good sword of a single Italian. But since you are prisoners, and there are none but Spaniards present, I who am a friend of Fieramosca, and of the Italians, tell you in their name, that you, or whoever he may be, who dares say they are afraid to meet any man living in mortal combat, and that they are, as you declare, poltroons and traitors, lies in his throat, and they are ready to measure themselves with any man in the world, on foot or on horse, full armed, or only with a naked blade, where and when, and at all times you like!"

La Motte and his companions, who had at the commencement of these words turned a proud look upon the speaker, now showed, by the change in their countenances, that they waited for the end with astonishment and anxiety. As in the midst of revelling and mirth, when a voice is heard above the gay throng, speaking words of steel and blood, and all hush and turn to listen to the startling message, so hushed the noisy mirth that went up from this table, and every Spaniard sat still in his place, and listened to know the end of this first rupture.

"We are prisoners," answered La Motte with ostentatious modesty, "and cannot accept challenges; nevertheless, with the permission of the knights who have received our swords, and who be it understood will receive from us a just ransom, I answer in my own name, and that of my companions and of all the chivalry of France, and I repeat what I have already said once, and which I will declare for ever, that the Italians are fit only to perpetrate deeds of treachery, and are cowards in war, that they are the most contemptible soldiers that ever set foot in stirrup, or buckled on a cuirass, and who says I lie lies himself, and I'll maintain my words blade in hand."

Then taking from his breast a crucifix of gold, he kissed it and laid it on the table. "And may I lose all hope in this emblem of our salvation when my last hour comes, and be branded a recreant knight, unworthy of bearing the golden spurs, if I and my companions do not answer to the challenge the Italians send me through your lips; and with the grace of God, our Lady and St. Denis, to favor our cause, we'll show the whole world the difference between the chivalry of France, and the canaille of Italy whom you espouse."

"Let it be so in God's name," answered Inigo. Then opening his doublet he drew from his neck an image of the Madonna of Monserrato, with which he made the sign of the cross, and laid it beside the golden cross of La Motte; and although he felt a slight sense of humiliation, that his poverty did not suffer him to offer a pledge of battle equal in value to that of La Motte, yet he triumphed over his shame and boldly said:—

"Here is my pledge. Diego Garcia will take them both in the name of Gonzales, who will not refuse a free field to our noble friends, nor to the French chivalry who come to try their steel."

"Certainly not," answered Garcia, as he took the pledges of the challenge. "Gonzales never will hinder these brave knights from measuring their swords, and doing the duty of good cavaliers. But you, Mons. Le Baron (speaking to La Motte), will have a harder bone to grind between your teeth than you think for."

"C'est notre affaire," replied the Frenchman, shaking his head with a smile. "Neither I nor my companions dread the most perilous and the most brilliant action of our lives, which shall be that in which we will show this brave Spaniard his mistake, hurling four Italians from their saddles."

Diego Garcia, who never felt really alive except when he was in the heat of a battle, or talking about coming to a fight, could hardly contain himself as he listened to these preliminaries of the challenge which without doubt would bring the combatants to the field with all the enthusiasm national honor could inspire; and raising his voice and head, and clapping his brawny hands together, which could have grasped a Samson, he cried out:—

"Your words, brave knights, are worthy of the men of honor and the soldiers you are, and I'm sure they'll not be dishonored by your deeds. Here's to the brave of all nations for ever!" Saying this, he was imitated by the rest of the company, and raising their goblets, they all drained them more than once with mirthful joy in honor of the future victors. When the gaiety had in part subsided, Inigo continued:

"The insult you have offered, Mons. Knight, to Italian valor is not a matter my friends will pass over so lightly, nor will it end like a gay tournament in the shivering of a single lance. I speak not now of the number of the combatants. This will be settled by the parties themselves. But however this may be, I offer to you, and to yours, battle in full armor, and to the last drop of blood; nor must the combat cease till the last man is either dead or captured, or compelled to fly from the field. Do you accept these terms?"

" I do."

This being adjusted and nothing more left to be done, the fatigues of the day, and the lateness of the hour, invited each one to his repose. The entire company rose from the table by common consent, and leaving the inn, separated in couples to

go to their several habitations. The French Barons were honorably treated, and assigned rooms near the knights who had captured them. In spite of the bravadoes they had used to show their contempt for the Italians, we think we may venture to say they had a secret conviction confirmed by long experience, that to come off with honor from their engagement, they would have need of something more than words. Even Inigo himself, although more than certain of the valor of his friends, and that when the glory of the Italian arms was at stake they would face the bravest steel in the world, still knew their adversaries were far from being contemptible on the field. These same Barons wielded the bravest swords in all the French army, and even he too could not but think anxiously of the final issue of this decisive combat. In fact, La Motte and his companions were men who would not quail in any field. Their prowess was known to all the soldiers of those times, and in the French army there were many others not a whit inferior to them in courage or address. The name of the brave Bajordo alone was enough to add weight to their scale.

But all these reflections were far from making the proud Spaniard repent for one moment; he had espoused the cause of the Italians, for he felt he would have been guilty of cowardice to have supported the insult hurled so meanly by the prisoners against his own friends, and he confidently asked himself the question, how the man who fought for the honor of his country could ever be conquered? With such reasonings, he reassured his confidence, and prepared to confer the next morning with Fieramosca, and use all the necessary diligence to secure the triumph of the cause he had espoused. Filled with these generous resolves, he threw himself on his couch for the night. But he was too excited to sleep, and he waited for the light of the morning to come through his window, to begin the execution of his lofty purpose.

CHAPTER III.

The Castle of Barletta, occupied by Gonzales and his chief officers, stood between the large piazza of the town and the sea. In the neighboring houses were lodged all the Spanish and Italian officers with their men. In one of the best of these habitations the two brothers, Prospero and Fabrizio Colonna, had taken their quarters, with the sumptuous train of attendants, familiars and horses, which made up the *suite* of that illustrious house. Ettore Fieramosca was dearer to them than any of the brave knights who followed their banners; for they had long known his brilliant qualities, and treated him like a son. They had assigned him, on the shore of the sea, near their own dwelling, a small house, which afforded comfortable quarters for himself, his servants, his horses and baggage. The windows of the highest room, which he used for his own private chamber, looked out on the east.

Our scene opens on the morning after the supper at the inn. It was yet so early the twilight dawn left the dingy line of the sea indistinct on the horizon; but the young Fieramosca had already left his couch, where he did not always find tranquil slumber, and gone out upon a terrace, under which the light waves that came with the fresh morning breeze from the sea were gently beating. Poor dwellers in northern climes! Ye know not the value of such an hour under the beautiful sky of the sweet south, on the shore of the sea, while nature is yet in her dreamy sleep, and the silence is hardly broken by the subdued heavings of the sea, which, like thought, has had no repose since the dawn of creation, nor shall have for ever. He who has never found himself alone at this hour, nor felt his fevered cheek fanned by the last flap of night's

wing, as it flies away from the heat of the morning, stealing along the beautiful sea-coast of the Kingdom of Naples, does not yet know the divine beauty of everything God has created.

Along the wall of the terrace a palm-tree grew. Our young soldier was sitting on the parapet, his shoulders leaning against the trunk, with his hands clasped on his knee, enjoying the quiet interval and the pure air which precede the Aurora. He was gifted by nature with the precious endowment of feeling vividly all that is good, or grand, or beautiful. His sole defect, if such it may be called, was generosity to a fault. But inured to arms from his childhood, he early learned men and things, and his upright and enlightened judgment defined the limits by which goodness itself must be controlled, that it may not degenerate into weakness; and the rigidity men often acquire who are familiar with danger became, in a heart like his, a tempered decision which constitutes a worthy and invaluable treasure in a manly soul.

The father of Fieramosca was a gentleman of Capua, of the school of Braccio da Montone, and having grown old in the wars which lacerated Italy during the fifteenth century, he had no inheritance to leave to Ettore but his sword. From his childhood, therefore, he had felt there was no calling worthy of him but arms, and for many years he could have no idea superior to his times in which no man led the life of a soldier except to win glory or wealth.

But his mind expanded, as it became more mature, and instead of wasting the leisure hours he was not in the saddle, in hunting, tilling and juvenile sports, he devoted them to the study of letters. A knowledge of the ancient authors and the illustrious deeds of the men who had spilt their blood for their country, and not for the gold of the highest bidder, taught him the deep baseness of the soldier who buckled on his armor only to grow rich by the spoil of the weak, and not for the noble purpose of defending himself and his country from the aggression of the stranger. In his childhood he was taken by his father to Naples, where he was called by pressing business. At the Court of Alphonso, he became acquainted with the

celebrated Pontano, who was so struck with the genius and beautiful form of the boy, he conceived for him the deepest affection. He placed him in the Academy, which, although it had been founded by the Panormita family, is still known by the name of Pantaniana, and here he guarded his education with the utmost care. He received in return, as a reward for his generosity, all that affectionate reverence which can spring from admiration and gratitude.

Love of country, and jealousy for the glory of Italy, once awakened by the eloquent words of his master, could never sleep again, and they grew so fervent they at last blended into a deep feverish passion. He challenged a French knight, his superior in years and strength, for calumniating the Italians. He fought him hand to hand, wounded him, and made him retract his insult in the presence of the King and his court. He left Naples, and after strange adventures, tried the wild fortunes of love—a hint of which has already been given by one of the French prisoners.

But when Italy was subjected by Charles VIIth, and the French arms held every part of the peninsula in fetters or alarm, all his patriotism was kindled to a flame as he saw these invaders put the chain upon his country. His very soul chafed with fury, when he listened to the story of their insolence, as they marched on triumphantly through Lombardy, Tuscany, and other of the Italian States, and when he heard the report of the indignant reply of Pier Capponi to the King, who had yielded to him, he went wild with joy, and lauded the brave Florentine to the stars.

On the fall of the Royal house of Naples, he determined to enlist under the banners of Spain, to weaken at least the rising power of the invaders, and he felt too, that the Spanish pride was less intolerable than the conceited vanity of the French; besides, an enemy who could approach the country only by sea, was less to be dreaded, and he believed that when the French had once been expelled from Italy, she could more easily establish a wise government of her own.

As the light broke over the orient that morning, the stars one by one retreated far away into the distant heavens, and finally were seen no more. The sun had already illumined the loftiest peaks of the Gargano, tinging them with a rosy hue which faded away into a soft purple down the shadowy sides of the mountains; while the shore, which extended in the form of a semi-circle along their base, till it reached the city of Barletta, unfolded with the advancing light a rich and diversified succession of valleys and hills, which came down to bathe themselves in the sea. Clumps of chestnuts on the heights gilded by the sun, growing thinner down the sides, were diversified by green fields or cultivated spots. Here a bold cliff showed its grey old rocks, made white by ages; there the slope from a mountain brow revealed tinges of rose or yellow, according to the nature of the soil. The cerulean sea seemed perfectly still, save where it laved the feet of the rocks, and left its scolloped line of pure white foam.

On an islet in the gulf near the land, with which it was joined by a long narrow bridge, a convent rose out from among palms and cypresses with its church, and a turreted tower fortified with battlements for protection against the attacks of Corsairs and Saracens of former ages.

Ettore was gazing intently in the direction of the old convent, knitting his eyebrows painfully, for the fog which at that hour covered all the low-lands, rendered the outline of the edifice almost invisible. He was straining his ear to catch the strokes of the bell which came faintly over the waters, sounding the morning Ave-Maria. So deeply was he rapt in his own musings he heard not the voice of Inigo calling to him from the court-yard. Receiving no reply, he ascended to the terrace.

"After a day like yesterday, Ettore," said he, stepping out on the terrace, "I would not have believed thee up before the sun."

One who has ever had his heart filled with a single grand and stirring thought, can fancy how grateful Fieramosca must have felt for this unlooked-for interruption. He turned upon the intruder a glance which showed more of the workings of his soul than he would willingly have revealed, and Inigo half believed his visit unwelcome. But the soul of Ettore was too just and generous to accuse his friend for this involuntary interruption. Without giving him any direct reply, he advanced, and taking his hand with perfect composure, smilingly inquired:

"What fair wind brings thee to me at this hour?"

"The very best of winds, for I bring thee news so glad thou'lt have to give me some generous reward. I have waited impatiently for daylight to break, and I have come to bring thee joyful intelligence. I have always envied thy valor, and to-day I shall be obliged to covet thy good fortune. Thou art happy, my Ettore! Heaven has reserved for thee a deed of glory, thou would'st have purchased I am sure at any price. But it comes to thee without money and without trouble. Thou wert indeed born under a fortunate star."

Fieramosca conducted his friend into the house and made him sit down before him, while he waited to hear his good fortune announced. Inigo briefly related to him the occurrences of the previous evening, the part he had taken for the Italians, and the origin of the challenge. When he came to the rehearsal of the insulting words of La Motte, and well he knew how to relate them, the bold Italian sprang to his feet, and striking his clenched fist upon the table as his eyes flashed with fiery exaltation:

"Our misery has not yet reached such a point," he cried out, "that arms and blades cannot be found to hurl back into the teeth of this French robber what his evil genius suffered to pass them. God bless thee, Inigo, for the word, my brother," he exclaimed, as he hugged him to his bosom. "I shall be bound to thee in gratitude for ever for the vigilance thou hast shown for our honor, nor shall life or even death ever tear us asunder!" And the caresses of the one and the pledges of the other were boundless.

When the fervor of this deep enthusiasm had partially subsided—"Now," said Fieramosca, "is not the time for words but deeds." He summoned a servant, and while he assisted him in dressing, the brave young knight went on naming the champions who were to be chosen for the combat, determining the list should be as large as possible.

"We have a host of good men," said he, "but a crisis of no little importance has come, and we must choose the best; Brancaleone is one. There's not a French lance that can make him bend a finger with those tremendous shoulders—Capoccio and Giovenale—all three Romans; and I tell thee the Horatii never wielded a stronger blade than they. Here are three; let us go on. Fanfulla da Lodi, that hot-brained fellow dost thou know him?"

Inigo raised his head, and contracted his eyebrows a little, compressing his lips, as though he wished to recall something.

"Oh! most surely thou knowest him! That Lombard, that lance-shiverer of Signor Fabrizio, * * * the one who the other day galloped round on the wall of the bastion to the gate of S. Bacolo. * * * *"

"Oh yes! yes!" answered Inigo, "now I remember."

"Well, that's four. And while he has hands he knows how to use them. I shall be the fifth, and with the help of God will do my duty. Maruccio," he cried out, calling to one of his attendants, "don't forget that yesterday the braces of my shield were broken—have them repaired immediately—grind the edges of my broadsword and dagger, and * * * what else was I going to tell thee—Ah! My Spanish armor, is it all in order?" The servant made sign that it was.

Igino smiled at the haste of his friend, and said to him,

"Thou'lt have time enough to put them all in order, for the combat will not come off to-day nor to-morrow."

Fieramosca, who did not think of this, was glowing with excitement, nor would he have deferred the struggle a single hour had the decision rested with him. He paid little heed to the words of the Spaniard, and went on enumerating others to make up the requisite number, for five seemed to him too few. He continued, in a hurried voice:

"And shall we leave out Romanello da Forli? Six: Ludovico Benavoli? Seven: These men are known to thee, Inigo; thou hast seen them at work."

"Masuccio, Masuccio!" and the servant who had gone down, mounted the stair-way again.

"My battle horse Airone, given me by Signor Prospero, give

him hay and oats, as much as he wants, and before the heat of the day comes on, trot him off for an hour at the top of his speed, and see how he works in his armor."

These orders were given while he was dressing. The servant laid his cloak on his shoulders, buckled on his sword, and handed him his cap with its blue plume. "Now I am ready, Inigo," said he. "First of all we must confer with Signor Prospero, and afterwards address ourselves to Gonzales for the salva-condotta."

They now left the house, and as they walked along the streets, Fieramosca still went on naming the brave men, who might be relied on when the hour of trial should come. But he decided upon none of them rashly—he carefully weighed the rank, the power, the valor, the history of all, that none but tried men might be brought upon such a field. Upon Brancaleone he depended more firmly than upon any of the rest, for he knew him to be a lofty-minded, magnanimous and powerful man. He admired him for his serious countenance, and his freedom from the thoughtlessness of his companions; and so deep was his love for him, he had many times been upon the point of revealing to him the adventures of his love for Ginevra. But he had hitherto been restrained by a feeling of reserve, and the want of a favorable opportunity. His family and his ancestors being Ghibellines, had always lived at Rome, and adhered to the party of Colonna. He was now the captain of a company of lancers, under the banner of Signor Fabrizio, and closely did he watch over his charge as he had always done. He was of middle height, broad shoulders, and deep through the chest; his words were few, and his whole time was devoted to his office. He was persevering to obstinacy in the execution of his purpose, and controlled only by the single desire of making the Colonna party victorious. This had become the absorbing passion of his life-rather than fail in its accomplishment, or any other established purpose of his soul, he would have been cut to pieces a thousand times.

Ettore and Inigo were obliged to pass his lodgings in going to those of the Colonni. They found him already occupied, with his sword hanging loosely from his belt, in giving orders to his servants about his horses, with the least waste of breath possible. Fieramosca invited him to go with them to prepare to revenge the insult which he spoke of with the deepest indignation. Brancaleone listened to him with perfect composure, and not a change went over his countenance. He only remarked laconically, as he joined the two and walked on:

"The blind must have proof; four thrusts in my style, and then we'll talk about matters." Nor was this self-confidence bravado, for the speaker had seen many a hard fought field,

and had always come off with honor.

CHAPTER IV.

THE insulting words of La Motte and the challenge that followed passed in the presence of more than twenty persons, and therefore could not remain secret. Indeed the report of the matter had already spread throughout the camp and the town, and when Inigo with his two Italian friends reached the house of Prospero Colonna, they found it formed the only subject of discourse. The flower of the Italian army had also gone to him as their leader to know what measures he intended to take. All those named by Fieramosca, and many others, had already arrived, and in a short time their numbers amounted to fifty. The insult had been aggravated and deep, and not a young soldier there but showed by his manner and his countenance how deeply it was felt. Several of the Spaniards, who had been at the supper table the evening before, and given their Italian friends an account of what happened, had assembled at the same place, and mixing with the company, repeating the words of the Frenchman and the challenge of Inigo, with observations of their own thrown in, occasionally interspersed with suggestions and examples in point, had fanned into raging a flame which needed no fuel to make it uncontrollable.

Some of the company assembled, were now standing by the gateway, others were dispersed through the court-yard, or gathered in the ground-hall where the Brothers Colonni were in the habit of giving audience to their followers when necessary, and dispatching the business of the company. The walls were hung with their armor worked richly in gold, with the finest designs and cuttings all burnished like flashing mirrors. The standard of the company was suspended from the ceiling

with an embroidered column worked upon a red field, with Columna flecti nescio for their motto, which was also painted upon the shields and armor, artfully arranged on all sides around the banner to produce the highest effect. Underneath the flag were two wooden horses covered with the complete armor of the battle-steeds of the Colonni, caparisoned in saddles and housings of fine crimson velvet, bearing the arms of their family on the saddle-cloths, and costly bridles all mounted in gold worked with a gorgeousness worthy of their proud owners.

Six hooded falcons, bound by a chain of silver, were standing upon a cross-bar suspended across the window, and near by could be seen every kind of implement for the chase, which formed the constant amusement of the knights and lords of those ages.

After some moments, Signor Prospero Colonna appeared at the door, and every one greeted him with reverence. He advanced and saluted the company with an air of dignity, and seating himself in a large arm-chair of red skin which stood at the head of the table he used for writing, courteously beckoned each one to be seated.

He was dressed in a mantle of black Arabesque sciamito with a large chain of gold hanging from the collar, from which was suspended upon his breast a medal of the same precious metal, worked exquisitely with the chisel. He wore a small dagger at his belt of black hammered steel, and in this simple attire his imposing presence, his countenance which showed a mingling of the pallid and brunette tint, his high forehead which bespoke itself the seat of no common power or wisdom—all inspired that reverence which is offered more readily to the gifts of the soul, than to the favors of birth or fortune. His eyebrows were heavy, his beard was worn after the Spanish fashion, and his eye had that measured and studied movement which indicated him to be a great and a powerful Signore.

The present occasion seemed to him, and really was, of the very last importance, not only because the glory of Italian arms was at stake, but the final result of the combat at this crisis, when the empire of Italy was vacillating between two con-

tending sovereigns, might prove of infinite consequence to him and the fortunes of his party and house. To come off victorious from such a struggle, would cover his soldiers and his standard with glory, and the French and Spanish captains would more sedulously guard against exciting his displeasure, and endeavor to court the favor of his friendship.

The reader is not ignorant of the bloody scenes Rome had witnessed during the inveterate quarrels of the Colonni and the Orsini. Enraged by the violence and intrigues of Alexander VI. and Cæsar Borgia, the Colonni had hoped either by the succor of foreigners or their own valor, aided by some fortunate occasion, to recover their power and possessions, and if the time was ever to come when they were to follow the beckonings of fortune and trust to her caprices, the time had certainly arrived. The sagacious Condottiere well knew the fiery and indomitable soul of Fieramosca; the strength of his patriotism and thirst for glory. He had often seen the spirits of his companions inflamed by his words with a lofty ambition to show themselves Italians, and he felt how much he could aid his cause at this crisis, by kindling still more deeply that divine ardor which renders men equal to great achievements.

To him, then, the Condottiere addressed himself. He said he already knew something of the affair, but wished to listen to a more minute account of it that he might be prepared for immediate action. Ettore made the statement, artfully embellishing Inigo's noble defence of the Italian nation, and when he had finished, Signor Prospero rose to his feet and spoke thus:

"Illustrissimi Signori: If you were not what you are, and I had not learned by experience your invincible courage on many a field where we have fought together, I might feel it appropriate to such an occasion to recal to you the memory of our fathers, who exalted our country to such a pitch of glory she shone over the universe,—nor could the shades or the desolations of ten centuries utterly extinguish her light. How these invaders from beyond the Alps, who now come to drink the blood of Italy, and not content, add insult to injury, trembled in those days when they listened to the name of Rome. I

would tell you so intolerable and barefaced has their insolence become, that after having torn from her brow, by what arts God knows, the glorious crown, purchased by so much toil and blood, which Italy wore when she was queen of nations, they seem to have effected nothing so long as they see a sword left in a single hand, or a cuirass upon a single breast -they would rob us till we are reduced so low we can no longer fight, or die for the salvation of our honor. Let me then tell you in a single word, these gorged robbers who trample on our necks, must be rolled in the dust, and full well do I read in your countenances that my words were likely to be too late for your Italian blades. * * But then * * the office of Condottiere, ungrateful as it may be on such an occasion, compels me to restrain your valor, and tell you that you cannot all fight in this combat; the glory of our revenge must be entrusted to a few swords. The magnificent Gonzales, obliged with an inferior force to maintain the right of the Catholic King, would not consent that the blood of his soldiers should be spilt in the quarrels of others. For ten men I hope to obtain a salva-condotta, and an open field. Without delay I go, and no sooner obtained, I return. In the meantime, each one of you write your name upon a sheet of paper. Gonzales will make the choice. But first you must swear to abide by all his orders."

This discourse was received with a murmur of approbation, and the whole company took the oath. The names were written and handed to Signor Prospero, who left his seat and advanced to the door, where two of his attendants awaited him with a caparisoned mule. He mounted, and accompanied only by these two persons, rode to the castle.

In half an hour, which seemed a century to the impatient anxiety of the young knights, he returned, alighted and entered the ground-hall, and each one resumed the place he had occupied when he came in the first time. The silence and the expression of every eye, fixed as they were on the Roman Baron, bespoke impatience to know the choice, and the hope of each one to be accepted.

"The magnificent Gonzales," said Signor Prospero, in closing, as he took the paper from his bosom and laid it on the

table, "was infinitely delighted with your bold proposal, and confident that victory will be the reward of such valor, he has conceded safe-conduct and open field for ten men-at-arms, and I found it no easy matter to win it for so large a number. He yielded to your request only through the importance of the crisis."

After explaining the sheet which contained the names of the chosen knights, he read the following: "Ettore Fieramosca." Hearing his name announced first upon the list, he seized with joy the arm of Brancaleone, who sat by his side, while the eyes of all were bent upon him in a manner which showed that no one felt he could challenge his title to the first post.

"Ramanello da Forli;" "Ettore Giovenale, Romano;" "Marco Carellario, Napoletano;" "Guglielmo Albimonti, Siciliano;" "Miale da Troja;" "Riccio da Parma;" "Francesco Salamone, Siciliano;" "Brancaleone, Romano;" "Fanfulla da Lodi."

A stranger, had he been present, without knowing a person there, could easily have distinguished by the joy which reigned on their countenances those whom fortune had destined to this noble enterprise. The face of Fieramosca, always pale, was now flushed with a beautiful vermilion; and in addressing his companions, the chestnut moustache which covered his lip trembled, so deep was the passion which filled his soul. His dream of ambition was at last to be turned into substantial glory. "At last," his heart told him, "the time has come once at least, when Italian blood can flow for a better purpose than to waste itself for ever in a hopeless defence against foreign invaders." Had some one then told him, thy brave men shall conquer, but thou shalt die in the field, he would have felt a thousand times blessed; but there was the hope, and almost the certainty of a victory, and life to enjoy it, and then he thought how full of glory would be his return from the field of battle-of banquets and exulting joy; and (for how rarely we see all the truth) he painted in his fancy the praises and the everlasting honor, that would cover Italy and his own bright name, and how proudly those he loved would bear themselves when his name was sounded. At this point, a thought which rose up from the depths of his heart, passed like a cloud over

his spirit, and for a single moment obscured the joy that beamed just before from his countenance—perhaps sorrows gone by pierced his heart with the sharp thorn of sad remembrance—but it lasted only a moment. Could he think of anything but the approaching combat?

Prospero Colonna had been chosen by Gonzales master of the field, which threw upon him the obligation of sending the written challenge, of mounting his men, of seeing they lacked nothing to insure the victory, and of having an eye upon the combatants of both parties, that the battle should be fair and just.

First of all, the day and the field of conflict were decided. It was now the first of the month. The battle was to take place after the middle, which would give ample time for preparation. When these matters were arranged, Signor Prospero turned to the chosen combatants and said:

"Our honor, Cavaliers, is suspended upon the edge of your swords, and I know not where it could more safely rest. But for this reason it is best you swear, that from this day till the day of battle, you will enter upon no other engagement, that you may be in no danger of wounds or impediments, which might keep you that day from your saddles; for well you know if this should happen, whatever might be the cause, our party would suffer?"

This pledge seemed more than reasonable to all, and there was not one, who did not accept these conditions with his oath.

In the meantime, the greater portion, seeing with regret they had nothing more to do in that place, had retired in confusion complaining of their lot. None but the ten now remained. Even they, when the paper was consigned to Fieramosca, abandoned the hall; and joining his friend Brancaleone, he returned to his house to prepare immediately to bear the challenge to the French camp.

They both armed themselves hastily in a coat of mail with sleeves and cap of steel, and, sending a trumpeter before them, set out for the gate of S. Bacolo, over against which the enemy lay. The drawbridge was lowered and they came out into a

Borgo, which had been abandoned during these disturbances, by its inhabitants, and half destroyed and burned by the licentious soldiery of those times. They were obliged to pass through several gardens before they got out upon the high road again, and they had a ride of at least an hour before they could reach the camp. In passing this deserted Borgo, Ettore met several poor women half covered with rags, dragging behind them by the hand or holding around their necks, their famishing children, wandering through the abandoned dwellings to see if by some chance some morsel had escaped the bloated avarice of the soldiers. The heart of the young man bled at the spectacle, and being unable to render them help, or to bear the sight, he put spurs to his horse and soon left the Borgo far behind him.

The wild joy so new to him that had been wakened in his heart by the coming battle, was apparently converted by this trivial casualty into his accustomed gloom, and he felt a deeper pity than ever for the woes of Italy, and a bitterer hatred against the French who had caused them. He could not conceal from Brancaleone as they rode along his commiseration excited by the sad spectacles he had just witnessed. Brancaleone was at bottom a good and benevolent man, in spite of the roughness of his bearing, acquired by constant familiarity with danger and blood, and the two knights mingled their sympathies together. Reading his companion's thoughts Fieramosca turned his head round and exclaimed:

"These are the beautiful fruits we reap from the presence of these Frenchmen; this the prosperity they bring us! * * But if I can only live to see that accursed race driven back over the Alps! * * * And * * I will say it, let us try to get rid too of these Spaniards." But he remembered he was fighting under their banners; he cut short his words and finished with a sigh.

Brancaleone cared more for the Colonna party than the good of his own country, and he could not enter fully into this feeling of his friend; but he got over the embarrassment as well as he could, and replied in his peculiar manner—

"If this army could once be routed, it would not be long,

perhaps, before we should taste the wine of Signore Virginio Orsino, and the cellars of the castle of Bracciano would once have a chance to see how the faces of Christians are made. Palestrina, Marina and Valmontona would no longer see the smoke of the camp of the villains, nor be scared at every moment by that cursed cry, Orso! Orso! but * * *"

Ettore saw by this reply, that although Brancaleone united with him in his desires, he was yet very far from being swayed by the same motives, and he made no further observation. They both rode on some distance without breaking the silence, while the herald preceded them not more than a bowshot ahead.

The reader will not have forgotten the hints thrown out by the French prisoner, about the unfortunate love of Fieramosca. His companions, who heard the matter then spoken of for the first time, regretted his misfortune, for they all loved him; and in a company of young men it is not easily forgotten, when any one fails to contribute his share to the common stock of cheerfulness and humor. During the morning, while the challenge was the theme of excitement at the house of Signor Prospero, his adventures were discussed, and they reached the ears of Brancaleone. He had little curiosity to inquire into other people's affairs, but after riding on some distance in silence, and seeing his companion so oppressed by melancholy, he divined the cause of his sadness, and determined to overcome his own natural disposition and draw from him a confession of his love. He prepared the approach to his heart by words of sympathy and affection, and at last requested him to narrate the story of the disappointment which had filled his soul with such gloom. Brancaleone knew well how to accomplish his purpose. Fieramosca knew, too, he could trust him with his secret, and the circumstances by which he was surrounded made it impossible for him to be silent; for a heart agitated by strong passion easily gives vent to its emotions. Lifting his eves upon his companion, he said-

"Brancaleone, thou asketh me to tell thee what I have never yet told to a living creature, nor would I reveal it to thee (and think not strange of this) did I not remember that I may die in the coming conflict, * * and then? * * *. Who would then be left to * * *? Yes, yes, thou art my true friend—thou art full of honor, and I must tell thee all. But thou must listen to my tale till it's done, for I cannot make thee understand in few words my strange and chequered fortune."

Brancaleone showed by the expression of his countenance his deep interest to hear his story, and Fieramosca suppressed

a deep sigh and began :--

"When the first rumors were spread, that the most Christian king was about to proclaim war, and make a descent upon the kingdom of Naples, I was, as thou knowest, in my sixteenth year in the service of the Moor. I demanded my discharge, for I felt I ought to risk my life in the defence of the royal house of Rohan, which had so long governed us. I went to Capua-our company was formed and equipped for the field. I was placed under the command of Count Bosio di Monreale, who had the control of the enterprise, and stationed for the defence of the city. Our munitions were all prepared, and having for the time nothing else to do, we gave ourselves up to amusement. Our evenings we passed in parties of pleasure, at the house of the Count, who was a friend of my father, and treated me like a son. Before I served under the Duke of Milan, I had often met him by accident. There I first knew his youthful daughter, and before we were aware of it, we loved each other better than all the world. The day I set out for Lombardy was a day of tears, and our parting was inconceivably painful. I recall it all vividly. I rode by under her windows on the most beautiful Spanish horse I have ever seen, and Ginevra waved her adieu to me as I passed by; and unseen by her father or any one of the cavalcade, for it was early dawn, she threw down to me an azure scarf, which I have kept to this day.

"But all this is scarcely worth relating. During the year of my absence the fervor of my first love seemed chilled. When I returned and saw Ginevra again, her form had assumed fairer proportions, and she had grown into the most beautiful maiden in all the realm of Naples. She was adorned with superior learning, and sang with the lute so sweetly, one could not hear another after listening to her. Against all these charms I could offer no resistance, and I plunged again into a vortex of love a hundred times more wild and deep than before. She had not forgotten former years, and I had returned with honor and fame won by my arms: and although she was so pure she tried to conceal her passion, I well knew she loved to hear me tell her tales about Lombardy, of the wars I had been in, and the courts and customs of that country. If she loved to listen to me, I loved better to entertain her. Our intimacy at last became such, we could live only in each other's presence.

"I knew how many misfortunes might attend on our love, and I began to foresee the sorrows we were preparing for each other. Just then the war broke out, and wretched is the man who finds himself in such circumstances, entangled in the snares of love. I had hitherto tried to be always with her, but now when I began to think what I should do, knowing our love was too deep ever to be forgotten, I summoned the resolution to conceal my affection and tear her from my heart. This continued for some time. But the struggle, instead of quenching my love, only inflamed it. I was resolute to overcome my feelings and put forth all my power of self-control. but the tide beat against me so strong it nearly drove me mad. The color left my cheeks; when I lay down I was exhausted, but I could not sleep. Her image was a living thing, which I could not for a single moment blot from my imagination, and the slow night was worn away with hot tears which wet my pillow, and which I could not dry. I lived only to struggle and

"After dragging away several weeks in this ineffectual struggle, I found I had reached a point where I must alter my course. Thou wilt already have fancied too the course I took. One evening at sunset I found her alone in her garden, and urged on by destiny, I confessed to her my quenchless love. She blushed, but made me no reply, and fled, leaving me more wretched and prostrate than ever. From that hour she seemed to seek to avoid me, and seldom addressed me a word when there were others present. I now became desperate, and being unable any longer to support the love that consumed me, I

determined to look only to God, and seek death in the field of battle. The company of the Duke di S. Nicandro marched through the city on their way to Rome to join the Duke of Calabria, and I prepared to accompany them. I had not made known my purpose to her. But one day I determined to test her heart; she made no reply to me, and I was forced to believe that the love I had believed she cherished for me, was only a dream of my fancy. The company of the Duke lodged that night in Capua, and were to proceed on their march next morning. I was resolute in my purpose, and prepared to be in my saddle at daybreak. I went to sleep as usual in the house of Ginevra's father; we three were alone, and we played together through the evening. I took an opportunity of telling him I had fixed my departure for the following morning; finding my idle life a burden on my hands, I was determined to seek the field, and I asked his permission to take my leave. The Count applauded my spirit, and I, who had yet by no means abandoned all hope, cast a glance upon Ginevra to read her countenance. Imagine my feelings when I saw the sudden change that passed over her face, and her eyes fill with tears. That single glance told too much. My purpose for the instant was shaken, but I knew it was too late to retreat with honor, and just at the moment I felt myself the happiest man in the world, I was forced to execute my unlucky purpose. This was the point where my evil fortune began. Would to God I had been struck dead when I put my foot in the stirrups of my saddle! It would have saved her and myself from a world of wretchedness.

"I went on to Rome cursing my fate. We reached the city just as King Charles was entering one gate, and our party were being forced out of the other. There was a light engagement, and I joined in the skirmish against a company of Swiss. I was left for dead with two gashes in my head, and for a long time I did not recover. These wounds I received near Velleti. I was taken into the city to be cured, where I remained two months without knowing anything more of Ginevra, or of her father. I only heard hour after hour, the sad news from the realm of

Naples, which was always so exaggerated by the people of the house, I could not depend upon anything I heard.

"At last I so far recovered my strength as to be able to leave the scene of my suffering, and one morning I mounted my horse and rode into Rome. The city was filled with confusion. Pope Alexander, who, in the passage of the king, had treated him with little courtesy, seeing the hopeless prospects of the Neapolitan arms, and that already a confederacy was talked about between the Moors and the Venetians, had begun to favor the cause of the French. He was regarded with the deepest suspicion, and having no alternative, fortified himself in the castle within the walls of Rome. I alighted in the town, and went immediately to pay my reverence to Monsignor Capece, who treated me with the utmost kindness, and insisted upon my taking lodgings in his own house.

"In the meantime the excitement in Rome was continually increasing; the vanguard of the army, composed of Swiss, being daily expected, apprehension manifested itself on all sides, and no one thought of anything but his own security.

"The army at last appeared before the gates of the city, but the Pontiff had already fled with Valentino to Orvieto. A portion of the French soldiery took up their quarters in the city, and the rest in the Campagna. But they conducted themselves with so much moderation, confidence was once more restored among the citizens. After some days the King advanced towards Tuscany, but the leaders of the army were continually passing through Rome to reach the scene of action, which still gave it a disturbed appearance. But quiet was at last so perfectly restored, every one again resumed his occupations as usual. I had felt the deepest anxiety for Ginevra, and as soon as I could leave with honor the house of Monsignor Capece, I set out for Capua to learn the fate of her from whom I had received no tidings since the day we separated.

"I began my journey early in the morning with a design of riding that day as far as Citerna. I passed out from Strada Julia, where the house of Monsignor stood, and turned into the Piazza Farnese. In going out of the city by the gate of S. Giovanni, under the coliseum, I met a troop of French horsemen with their baggage, and as they passed by, I observed a litter upon which one of their captains was borne, and from the bandages around his temples it was evident he had been wounded in the head. Reining in my horse to look at the wounded man, I was surprised by a sharp scream, and turning round I saw Ginevra on horseback, following on with the company. It was her, but, oh God! how changed. It was a miracle I did not fall to the ground. My heart throbbed under its mail. But suspecting what might have taken place I pretended to continue my journey, but afterwards turned my horse to keep sight of the cavalcade and at least to follow them to their lodgings.

"Thou mayest well imagine I was not bold enough to present myself again before Monsignore, who believed me many miles on my journey, much less before Ginevra, fearing if I heard her speak, I should listen to what I would never have suffered-I chose therefore to await the solution of the mystery I could not penetrate. Curbing in the reins of my horse, who was making his way back to the stables of Monsignore, I passed through Banchi alla Chiavica, and stopped at the shop of one Franciotto della Barca, so called, his business being to take goods from Ostia to the Ripa Grande. He was one of my best friends, and riding up to the door, I dismounted and took him aside, and told him for certain reasons I had left the house of Monsignore, and it was necessary for me to keep myself secluded. He offered me his house in the Borgo, and conducted me to it immediately. I went so far as to tell him that I had seen a young lady whose family I knew, in the company of several Frenchmen, and wished to know how she had been brought to the city, to render her any aid in my power. Indicating to him the place where she had dismounted, I requested him to see some of the servants, and enable me to have an interview with her, which would further my design. He was a man of subtle genius, and found it very easy to effect this. About half an hour before midnight he came and took me to a hotel, where we found one of his young men who had inveigled one of the attendants of the French Baron, and made him drunk, and afterwards tell the whole story. We arrived just in time.

"A few questions of Franciotto drew from the fellow what I never would have wished to know, about the fate of Ginevra. He told us that when they reached Capua, the garrison opposed their entrance with the utmost firmness, and they forced the gates, and sacked almost the whole town; that his master, Claudia Grajano d'Asti, with a body of armed men, entered the house of the Count of Monreale, who had been carried home wounded in the assault. He mounted to the chamber where the Count was lying, and the daughter flung herself on her knees, and implored protection for herself and father. Grajano was untouched by the appeal, and the Count raised himself upon his elbow and supported himself in bed as well as he could, and said: 'All I have in the world is yours, and my daughter shall be your wife, but for God's sake preserve her honor from the ruffianism of your soldiers.' Despairing of the life of her father, or even her own, Ginevra could not resist. Two days after the Count died.

"I bit my hands in agony! Oh! thought I, had I been there, she would never have fallen into the hands of this wretch. But now it was too late. I hurried away from the place, and wandered all night round the streets like a madman, ready to seek my own destruction. But the hand of God withheld me from this crime. The agony, the torturing despair that wrung my inmost heart! I could not describe a thousandth part of what I suffered. My breast heaved till I thought I should suffocate. I could no longer support a life that seemed blighted with the curse of heaven, and I formed the wildest projects, and the maddest resolutions, in my whirling brain. moment I swore I would murder the husband-the next I determined to court some strange death for myself, to prove to Ginevra I loved her still, and there was a gleam of pleasure in the thought of the grief she would have poured over my tomb. I balanced between these desperate resolutions, till my brain became wild. In this state I remained for several days, till at last a night came when I determined to try my fortune. Wrapped in a cloak that completely covered my form, and a

hood which came over my head, I went to her aoor and knocked. A person appeared at the window and asked what I wanted. 'Say to Madonna,' I replied, 'that one who comes from Naples would speak with her to bring her news of her friends.' I was admitted and shown into a small parlor on the first floor, faintly lighted by a lamp. At one instant I seemed to be standing before the very gates of paradise-the next, before the gates of hell itself, so terrible was the contrast from one moment to another. I felt my knees give way under me, and fell half fainting into a chair. In a few moments, which seemed to me a thousand years, I heard the rustling of the feet and dress of Ginevra on the stairs. I nearly lost my consciousness. She entered, and standing half concealed, gazed upon me, and canst thou believe it, I could neither speak, move, nor utter a loud noise. The moment she knew who I was, she gave a shriek, and would have fallen fainting to the ground, had I not caught her in my arms. I unlaced her dress, and tried to restore her, knowing how dreadful was the crisis; and nerved up by fear of discovery, seized a flower vase of water standing in the room, and bathed her forehead. But the scalding tears that fell from my eyes and flooded her face were more powerful, and they recalled her to life. I could only take her hand and press it upon my lips, with a passion so wild I thought my soul would escape from my body in a paroxysm of joy. This lasted a few moments. At last, all trembling she withdrew her hand, and in a voice scarcely audible, told me, 'Ettore, if thou only but knew my misery.' 'I know it all, alas! too much,' I replied, 'and I ask no more, I wish no more, only to die near thee, and sometimes to see thee while I live!

"I heard a noise above, and a chill struck through my bones: for I supposed we should be discovered, which would only double her misery. I took my leave more by acts than words, prayed her to let me go, and fled from the house less afflicted and disconsolate than before.

"In the mean time the wounds of the husband did not heal, and many Frenchmen, gentlemen and prelates, crowded to visit him. Although the angel-face of Ginevra showed the canker-worm was at her heart, it bore the same unearthly beauty, still saddened, it's true, by a languid paleness: but no one could gaze on her without feeling her loveliness. Her youth, her charms, her divine countenance, excited every day more and more the admiration of those who frequented her house, and the fame of such enchanting beauty, borne by every tongue, at last reached the ears of Valentino.* Rome was then filled with the reports of his terrific deeds.

"Not a month before, the Duke of Candia, his brother, was assassinated in the streets by night, and suspicion had lighted on him. He soon laid aside the purple. Universal indignation was excited against him, and he was charged with every crime. I had terribly feared, even before this, that Ginevra would become the object of his vile ambition; and I now heard, to my sorrow, more than one scandal breathed against her name; but out of regard to her, I was obliged to listen to them, and consume the wrath within me which I could not vent without betraying my situation.

"In the mean time, however, by various pretexts, I was enabled to visit the house; and I saw her husband. Although the sight of him gave me indescribable pain, I bore it willingly, and would have suffered anything in the world sometimes to see her. But, from our first meeting, no word of love passed between us—it would have been useless, for well I knew the workings of her heart.

"This Grajano d'Asti was a common man, neither handsome nor ugly, neither good nor bad. He was, however, a good soldier, but would just as soon have fought for the Grand Turk as anybody else, if he had been better paid by him. Ginevra brought to him an ample fortune, and he loved her as he loved the estate for its rent-roll, and nothing more.

"Let us pass over several weeks. Every evening I could see Ginevra, for the husband had no suspicion of me. He was suffering continually from his wound which healed slowly, and being a man who cared little and knew less about love, I was able to render my visits more frequent.

^{*} The infamous Cæsar Borgia, who hung like an evil star over the path of Ettore Fieramosca.

"Valentino, in the mean time, was raising troops to march into Romagna, and he made capital of Grajano d'Asti, who had now so far recovered as to be able to mount his horse. Borgia knew how to mould him to his wishes, and he won him over almost without an effort. He bound himself to raise twenty-five lances, and the husband of Ginevra flattered himself he had obtained very advantageous terms.

"The Duke came one evening to the house of Grajano, to execute their stipulations, and a small supper party was made on the occasion, which was attended by several French bishops and idle knights, who had come to offer him their services, for at that period he received all who presented themselves.

"I was also half determined to give in my name too, and follow the fortunes of Ginevra and Grajano, but although I cannot tell why, I was prevented from being present at the supper that evening. I wandered about the most deserted parts of Rome, that night, tormented by a thousand suspicions, nor could I shake off from my fancy the strangest reflections. For several days Ginevra had seemed to me more wretched, and I fancied I saw on her brow an indication of some fatal secret she studied to keep buried in her own heart. I passed that night, and God only knows with what agony; and now listen and see if the heart does not sometimes speak the truth!

"The next day at sunset I visited her. When I was entering the house, I heard an unusual confusion, and a monk d'Araceli Col Bambino, bearing a lighted taper, was just coming out. I sprang into the house, with a cold sweat streaming from my

body, and a servant told me Ginevra was dying!!

"After supper, the evening before, she had been seized by a fainting fit, but no one seemed to be alarmed. She was put in bed—hot cloths were applied, and she remained quiet through the night. Already late in the morning, she had showed no symptom of returning to life. A certain Jacopo da Montebuono, who had dabbled in medicine, was called in, and he found her body almost cold. The wretch, instead of resorting at once to the most powerful restoratives, left her,

after giving an order she should not be disturbed. He returned late, and feigning alarm, cried out she was dying, and ordered a priest to be sent for in haste. Without affording her any relief or attempting to subdue this mysterious malady, a little after the Ave-Maria sounded, the family heard it announced from the lips of the physician, that she was dead!"

At this moment the French tents appeared, and Ettore was obliged to interrupt the current of his story. The herald sounded the trumpet ahead to announce the arrival of a messenger, and a mounted soldier came out of the gate to demand

the object of his coming.

When the object of their mission had been explained the officer of the guard at the station was called, and seeing the communication was a letter written by Gonzales to the Duke di Nemours, Captain of the French army, he requested Brancaleone and Fieramosca to wait till the letter had been sent to the Duke, and permission obtained for them to enter the camp.

He offered them in the meantime a tent which formed the lodging of the guard of the gate, but the two friends being told the station of the captain was at a great distance, decided to wait where they were till the return of the messenger.

Near by there was a clump of oaks thickly foliaged, whose shade offered them a fine retreat from the heat of the mid-day sun. The two knights rode up and tied their horses to the trees, and throwing aside their helmets, seated themselves side by side against the old trunk. A fresh breeze blew on them from the sea, and the one resumed his story with recovered spirits, and the other listened with still deeper interest.

CHAPTER V.

FIERAMOSCA resumed his narration as follows:

"Ginevra lost, there was an end of the world to me. I left the house, and although I felt that my eyes were bursting from my head, they did not shed a single tear. Where I went or what I did for the first few moments I could not tell, were it not for the circumstances which occurred afterwards. I walked about like an idiot, or as it sometimes happens as thou knowest when the cleaving-stroke of a double-handed iron mace falls upon one's helmet, and makes the ears deaf for a short time, and everything reel before the eyes. Without knowing what had happened I passed the bridge (the house of Ginevra was near the Tower of Nona), and ascending the Borgo, reached the piazza of S. Pietro.

"My generous Franciotto knew something of my misfortunes, and went out in search of me. He found me (how I got there I cant say) lying at the base of a column. I felt two arms around me which lifted me up, and set me against the pillar. I looked around and saw him at my side. He spake soothingly to me, and I gradually came back to myself. He helped me to my feet, and with difficulty I returned to the house. He undressed me, and, putting me to bed, he sat by my side without annoying me with any attempt at consolation

which would have been worse than idle.

"In this manner we passed the night without speaking. A raging fever came over me, which sometimes mounted to my brain, and my wild fancy painted an enormous figure loaded with armor standing on my breast till I became suffocated.

"At last tears came to my relief. The hour of six sounded from the castle, and daylight came through the openings of

the window. My sword and armor were suspended from the wall over my head, and raising my eyes I caught a sight of the blue scarf given to me many years before by Ginevra. That sight, swift as an arrow on the wing, opened the flood-gates of my tears, which began to flow in streams. This removed the load from my brain, and saved my life. After weeping unrestrained and unceasingly for a whole hour, I felt this dreadful load was gone, and I could listen and converse; and with the help of my good Franciotto, I got through the day so well that at evening I left my bed. As I gradually recovered my reason, I began to think how I should act under so tremendous a calamity. It seemed to me I never could survive the shock, and instead of dying by inches, to escape the horrors of a lingering torture I resolved to die then, and take my flight after that glorified soul. When I had fixed my purpose, I felt that I had made a great gain, and once more I was quiet.

"Franciotto, who had not left me from the evening before, went out for a moment to visit his shop, promising to return immediately. I laid my hand upon this very dagger that now hangs from my side, resolute to execute my purpose at the moment; but remembering that very night Ginevra was to be laid in her tomb, I determined to see her face once more and die by her side. Half dressed as I was, I buckled on my sword, and taking with me the last thing I valued on earth, my blue scarf, left the house.

"I crossed the bridge, and entered the cemetery. The monks Della Regola soon appeared, walking two by two, accompanied by a train of ecclesiastics chanting the *Miserere*, though Strada Julia, and over Ponte Sisto, bearing the bier covered with a large pall of black velvet.

"If I must tell thee all, this sight did not agitate me for a single moment, for I thought if we had been severed in life at least in death we would be united. We were both journeying to the same far off land, and the same tomb would give us repose together. I followed with a triumphant but gloomy joy, feeling myself already transported beyond the barriers of the eternal world, ready to go wherever impulse led me. Ponte Sisto and Tresterere passed, we entered S. Cecilia.

"The bier was placed in the sacristy where slept the ashes of the son of S. Francesca Romana, and I stood on the side of the church leaning against the wall while the monks chanted

the last requiem. I heard the Requiescat in pace.
"They all left the church in silence, and I remained alone in the darkness, for there was no light but the lamps of the Virgin. I heard from a distance the murmur, and the returning steps of those who had gone out from the temple. At this moment the night hour sounded, and the sacristan, who was making his rounds through the church, rattling his mass of keys, preparing to close the doors, passed by me. He saw me and said, 'I close the doors now.' 'I shall remain,' I answered. He looked fixedly on me as though he knew who I was, and said:

"'Art thou one of the Duke's men? Thou art rather too bold; but the door will be left ajar and stay if thou wilt, I shall go about my business.' Without saying another word he

"I paid little heed to him, but his words stirred me, and I knew not whether he or I dreamed. What Duke? What door left ajar? What did the wretch mean? thought I to myself.

"But a thousand miles from the truth, and incapable of reasoning at such a time, I immediately returned to my first resolution, and after a few moments, everything being still as the grave, I approached the bier with the sweat of death on

"Removing the pall which covered it, and drawing my dagger, which was strong and sharp, I began to force open the coffin, and with no other instrument, I performed the task with dif-

ficulty, but I at last succeeded.

"That beautiful form was wrapped around with its pure white winding sheets, and before I left the world I wished to see once more that angel face. I bent upon my knees and removed the veils which hid from me the only sight dear to me on earth: The last was raised, and Ginevra's countenance was there, pure and calm as a waxen statue. All trembling, I pressed my brow against her's, and I could in my delirium but kiss her lips. They stirred with a light tremor! I

thought I should fall dead! Oh! Almighty God! I cried, can thy mercy go so far? I pressed my hand to her pulses! The beating of her heart took away my breath! The pulses throbbed! Ginevra was alive!!

"But think how I felt now, all alone. If she awakes, said I, and finds herself in this place, the frightful horror will be enough to kill her. I knew not what to do, and my brain whirled. I lifted my hands to the Virgin, and prayed—'Oh' true mother of God; let me save her, and I swear by thy Divine Son, I will consecrate every thought of my soul to thee.' And in my heart, I made a solemn vow never to do an act that could tempt her purity, and to annihilate all vestige of the thought of murdering her husband, which till now had been a settled purpose of my soul. And Divine aid could not be implored so deeply from the heart without an answer to

prayer.

"My faithful Franciotto, who had left his house, as I told thee, had seen me as he was returning, going towards the bridge, and half divining the truth, and fearing, as he afterwards told me, I should be driven to some desperate purpose, had followed on in my steps. But he wisely refrained from speaking to me, and tried to disturb me as little as possible at this dreadful period, well knowing mine was an exigency in which council would avail nothing, and that he could serve me only by help in the moment of necessity. He had entered the church with the funeral train, and remained hid in a distant corner, and has often since told me he saw me take out my dagger, and was on the point of springing upon me, and stood ready for the leap; but seeing I took the instrument only to open the coffin, he kept still, and only at this moment, when he knew I needed help, did he discover himself. I heard him approach just as I finished my prayer, and as I turned, he stood by my side. On the ground I embraced his knees as one who gave me two lives at once. I greeted him as an angel from heaven. I rose up, and began to think how we could conveniently and securely transport her away. At last we took the velvet pall spread over the bier, and turning it inside out that if she revived she might not become conscious of the

mournful covering under which she lay, and arranging the winding sheets to make the softest bed possible, we carefully raised her from the coffin and gently placed her in the envelope.

"Poor Ginevra had not yet opened her eyes, but suppressed sighs had escaped from her breast. In looking through the closets, Franciotto had luckily found the flagons used for the Mass, and he immediately placed the small spout of one of them to her lips, and poured down only a small quantity to revive her but partially, for we did not wish her to recover entirely her consciousness in that place. And now with the utmost care, Franciotto at the feet, and I at the head, took hold of the corners of the pall, and lifted it from the ground, and thanks to the holy Virgin, bore it safely from the church. We took the street of S. Michele, and came to the Ripa, which was surrounded with boats. One of them was Franciotto's, and having no better or safer resource in this trying crisis, we laid Ginevra in it, and hastily preparing a bed under cover, aided by two or three men who guarded the boat, I placed myself by her side, and Franciotto ran for a barber, a friend of his, a brave and a faithful man, to come to our help and bleed her if neces-

"He was obliged to pass by the church of S. Cecilia again. Here he saw in passing, a company of armed men gathered around the door, which at first he supposed to be a company of policemen. He cautiously approached them under the wall so near, he plainly discovered they were far from being the men he had supposed. They were about thirty soldiers armed with pikes and broad-swords. On one side was an empty litter borne by two men, and he who appeared to be their guide stood looking into the church, wrapped in his mantle, changing his attitude often, resting first on one foot and then on the other, unable to curb his impatience. In a few moments two servants came out of the church and addressed to him these words:—' Excellency, the coffin is uncovered and

empty.

"Such was the power of these words, the man to whom they were addressed hurled a blow with the lantern he held under his cloak, against the head of the speaker, and brought him reeling to the ground, and had not the other fled he would have fared worse, for the guide had already drawn his sword. But after raging around the church for some time, he was obliged to abandon his undertaking, burning with fury.

"Franciotto had observed amongst the armed men, one dressed in a cape and mantle of the court, whom he recognized by the light of the torches, as the villain Doctor Jacopo da Montebuono. His presence in such a place, and with such

a company, aroused strange suspicions.

"When they set out, he followed on behind them at a distance, and instead of going for the barber, he determined to make sure of Jacopo himself. He only feared he might be attended by some of the company till he reached his own house. But it pleased God to order it otherwise. He lived at the entrance Della Langara, and when he reached Pontesisto, he took a short passage to his house, leaving the rest of his companions to pass over the bridge. Franciotto accosted him under the arch, and telling him to fear nothing, besought him to go with him to the Ripa Grande for a young lady who was dying, and so well did he operate upon him he effected his purpose, and they started off together.

"He had no sooner stepped under the awning of the boat than he saw he had been caught in a snare. Taking me aside, Franciotto told me what he had seen and heard before the door of S. Cecilia, and I began to think deeply—the veil was lifted, and in a flash I saw through everything that had passed. Jacopo I knew to be a coward, and I seized him by the throat and threatened him, till he confessed that on the evening of the supper, he had, by order of Valentino, given to Ginevra a drugged wine, by virtue of which she had remained in a state of apparently suspended animation. To help on the plot, he had himself declared she was dead, and had her brought to the church, whence the Duke would be able to carry her off in the night. It was a miracle that a plot, so well laid, should all vanish in air; and imagine how deep was my gratitude to God!

"I looked Jacopo in the face, and said—'Listen to me, Master Jacopo; I can put an end to you very quick with this dag-

ger, but I'll save your life on condition you can save hers. Choose then your remedies, if you would like to go back to your damnable crew safe; and if you ever breathe a word of this to a living soul, I'll kill you, as I would a dog, wherever you

"The trembling Master promised all I required, and instantly placed himself at the side of his victim, while we shoved off the boat. We arrived at Della Magliana safely, a little after midnight. The good Master, however, has never opened his lips about it to this day.

"Ginevra had in the meantime revived, and opening her eyes, gazed around wildly. Being now certain she would recover, and feeling I had performed a miracle, I thanked God from the bottom of my heart; I knelt by the head of her bed, having secreted her in a small room of the wine-merchant. A short time after, she withdrew the hand I had been holding in mine, and which I had pressed to my forehead and lips, and pushing back the hair which had fallen over my eyes, she gazed on me intently, and exclaimed, 'Oh! art thou my Ettore?

* * * But how here? * * * Where are we? * * * This does not seem like my chamber! * * * I'm in another bed! * * * Oh! God, what has happened!'

"At this moment Franciotto, who came in at intervals of a few minutes to see how everything was going on, entered the door. Ginevra gave a scream, and throwing herself on me all tremblingly, cried out * * * 'Help, me Ettore!—there he is!—there he is!—Oh! help me, blessed Virgin!' I tried to compose her alarm as well as I could; but all in vain: and so terribly was she overcome by the sight of the good Franci-otto, her eyes seemed to be bursting from her head. I saw the cause of her fright, and told her, 'Ginevra, don't be alarmed he is not the Duke, but my best friend on earth, and he would die to save thee!

"And, oh! thou shouldst have seen how, at these words, all her fears dispelled, as she turned kindly towards Franciotto a look which seemed to ask pardon for her suspicion. Imagine how my heart cursed that demon at this hour.

"Ginevra then began to question me about the strange events

that had brought her where she was. But I requested her to remain tranquil for a short time, confiding her safety to me, and think only of her health, which demanded repose. I persuaded her, and she became quiet; and having taken a cor-

dial, towards morning she fell into a tranquil sleep.

"But I slept not. Full well I knew it was madness to hope she could remain with me. In spite of my inclination and hers too, she would perhaps choose to return to her husband as soon as her strength would allow. I therefore sent Franciotto immediately to Rome to learn the state of matters there, and how the affair was understood. He returned towards evening with the intelligence that Valentino had assembled his forces and marched towards Romagna, taking Grajano and his troop with him. But nothing was known of his intentions.

"I communicated this to Ginevra and gave her a relation of everything that had occurred; she hesitated what to do. I used all the arguments I could bring to convince her that she should by no means return to Rome where Valentino would be able again easily to get her into his hands and revenge himself for the failure of his first plot; that her husband, all absorbed in the affairs of the war and entirely won over to the Duke, would scarcely be able, even if he desired it, to render her effectual protection—and where could we trace his steps? I prayed her with all the affection of my soul not to oppose herself to an almost divine admonition, which had brought us together again by such a strange order of events, and snatched her from the very midst of plots and perils. I showed her that after leaving the place where we were, her supposed death would elude suspicion, and enable us to seek some safe refuge where, free and tranquil, she might at least wait to follow the leadings of her wild fortune, and the destiny of her husband. Raising my hands to heaven, I uttered these words, - Ginevra! I swear to you by the Most Holy Virgin, that with me thou shalt be as thou hast been with thy mother.' Franciotto lent his persuasion also, and the good Ginevra, after many sighs, for she could not subdue the strange but pure feeling which sent the blush over her cheeks, replied:-'Ettore, thou shalt be my guide, and it rests with thee to show that Heaven has sent thee to be my protector.'

"This resolution taken, I read another lecture to the doctor with my hand on my dagger, and sent him off to Rome with Franciotto, from whom I parted with the deepest pain. We embarked in a boat with our scanty wardrobe, and going down the river to Ostia, crossed over by land to Gaeta. The kingdom of Naples was then in the hands of the French, and Valentino being on good terms with them, I did not feel secure till we were divided asunder a thousand miles. For this reason I endeavored to hasten on our journey as rapidly as possible, without risking the precious life of Ginevra. I made all our arrangements for the voyage, and leaving those hateful shores, we were brought by God's blessing safely to Messina. I thanked God with my whole soul for having brought us safely through such tremendous dangers."

At this moment Fieramosca raised his eyes and saw a large company of cavaliers riding up towards them from the camp.

"Too many things remain to be related," he added, "and now we have not time. But one word more. We passed nearly two years in that city. Ginevra retired into a convent, and I passed for her brother, and visited her often in her retreat. During this period the war broke out between the Spanish and French. The life I was leading seemed to me unworthy a soldier and an Italian, and bound as I was by my oath in S. Cecilia, I could not hope for a virtuous consummation to our love.

"All Italy was in arms. The French seemed to be the strongest party, and besides the love of country, which urged me on to fight against the most dangerous enemy, I bore an old grudge against the French, and hated them for their insolence. And to tell the whole truth, I hoped for more security for Ginevra under the protection of the banners of Spain, where Valentino could not reach her.

"I made known my feelings to the spirited Ginevra, who, notwithstanding her love for me, could not bear I should remain behind, while the fortunes of Italy were being decided on the field of battle. My purpose was fixed, and I wrote to Signor Prospero Colonna, who was assembling an army for Gonzales, to enrol me under his banner.

"At this time he was with his company at Manfredonia, and we made the voyage from Messina to that port. A strange accident occurred on the passage. We had reached Taranto, and reposing ourselves a little, we left the port one morning to go to Manfredonia. There was a thick fog, common in the month of May, and our vessel, with two lateen sails and twelve oarsmen, rode on calmly over the waters. About noon, we discovered four vessels approaching in our wake, at a gunshot's distance. They hailed us, and commanded us to heave to. I wished to escape from them, and we could have done it, for we had the wind free, but fearing they might make us some trouble with their guns, we shortened sail till they came up. They were Venetian vessels coming from Cyprus, conducting to Venice Caterina Cornara, Queen of that island. Hearing who we were, they gave us no disturbance, and we pursued our voyage behind them. It was already night, and the fog had become almost impenetrable. It seemed more than fortunate to have fallen in with fellow voyagers who helped us on in our passage through the darkness.

"About midnight, Ginevra retired to sleep. Only two men were left on deck to watch the sails and steer our vessel, and even they were half asleep. I could not sleep, and I sat on the prow agitated by a thousand fancies. All was still, and I thought I heard the footsteps of men on the deck of the Queen's vessel, which was about half a bow-shot ahead of us. They were speaking in under-tones, but angry words were passing between them. I bent my ear down, and listened, and heard a woman's voice mingling with the rest, apparently pleading for mercy. Soon after a cry followed and repeated several times, as though she was being choked. Then came a plunge in the water, like that of a body thrown into the sea. Suspicious of some foul deed, I raised myself up, and contracting my eyebrows saw something white floating on the water I leaped into the sea, and in four strokes was along side of it. I caught the border of a garment between my teeth and swam back to my vessel, drawing after me a body. My men had heard the noise, and they came forward to help me on board with the body. We found on examination, it was a

young female, with no garment on but a chemise, her hands bound with a cord, and she gave no sign of life. But by instant and powerful restoratives she came to. We fell back some distance astern of the Venetians, who kept on their voyage, and paid no attention to us, as we shortened sail and waited for daylight. At sunrise we again spread our canvass, and in a few hours reached Manfredonia, where I found Signor Prospero, and took lodgings for Ginevra at the inn.

"Thou wouldst ask, perhaps, who this damsel could be we saved from the sea; but I cannot gratify thy curiosity, for I do not even know myself. Neither Ginevra nor I have ever been able to get a word from her about her history. She was born in the Levant, and is, without doubt, a Saracen; and she is one of the most pure, and upright, and amiable persons in the world—at the same time so undaunted, she has no fears of arms or blood, and in the face of danger she is more man than woman. From that day to this she has remained with Ginevra. I prevailed on the abbess of S. Ursula to receive them both into her convent, where we are so near each other, while the war keeps us shut up in Barletta, that I can visit them almost every day."

CHAPTER VI.

Ar this moment the French cavaliers, who were to conduct the two Italian knights to the camp, rode up; and they mounted their horses to accompany them. They passed through long lines of tents and pavilions, amused with the aspect of the multitude who gathered around the road to learn the object of their coming. Passing a crowd of soldiers, they came out on a piazza, formed by numerous pavilions on the four sides, and in the centre, under a large spreading oak, was extended the tent of the commander. Here was congregated the flower of the officers of the army. They dismounted, and were ushered into the pavilion. After a brief but courteous reception, two stools were brought, and they took their seats with their backs to the door.

The tent, which was lined with drapery of blue, embroidered with gold lilies, was in the form of a quadrangle, divided into two equal squares by four light columns of wood, variegated with stripes of blue and gold. On the back part stood the couch, covered with a leopard's skin, under which two large hounds were sleeping. Near by was a table, loaded with a quantity of flagons, brushes, decorations of honor, and jewels, flung confusedly together; behind which was placed a polygon mirror, in a frame of chiselled silver, which showed the gentil Duke did not disdain the arts of the toilet. The modern exquisite would have sought in vain upon this toilette, the indispensable Eau de Cologne; but he would have found a substitute in two large vases of gilt-silver, labelled Eau de Citreban, and Eau Dorée. Several suits of armor were suspended from the columns in the form of trophies; and extending from one to the other on hooks, glistened lances and spears.

Under them, in the centre of the tent, sat Louis a'Armagnac, Duke of Nemours, Viceroy of Naples, who had been entrusted with the management of this war by Louis XII. He was dressed in a blue mantle, lined with sable; and his noble features shone with youth, daring and chivaleresque courtesy. L'Aubigné, Ibo d'Alegre, Bajardo, Monseigneur de la Palisse, and Chandenier, were by his side; and all around were clustered knights and barons of less importance, who formed the circle that closed around Ettore and Brancaleone.

The latter knew a good deal better how to manage his hands than his tongue, and he left to Fieramosca the task of unfolding their embassy.

The young knight rose; and casting around the circle a rapid glance, which gleamed with the bold ardor, unmixed with insolence, which became so well the place, the hearers and the subject of his mission, he related the insult of La Motte, proposed the challenge, and in compliance with the etiquette of the times, explained the paper he held in his hand, and then read the following communication:—

"High and Puissant Seigneur Louis d' Armagnac, Duc de Nemours.

"Having understood that Guy de La Motte, in presence of Don Ynigo Lopez de Ayala, declared the knights of Italy cowards in war; therefore, with your good pleasure, we answer, that he has basely lied, and will lie as often as he repeats the charge. And for this cause we demand that you please to grant us the field à toute outrance for us and ours, against him and his, in equal number, ten against ten.

"PROSPERO COLONNA, "FABRITIO COLONNA.

" Die VIII. Aprilis, MDIII."

When he had finished reading the challenge, he flung it at the feet of the Duke, and Bajardo, unsheathing his sword, raised it on the point. A moment after, while he was speaking to the Duke of the challenge, his burning eye fell upon a brightly burnished shield which hung on a column before his face, and reflected those who stood behind as clear as life. There crossed this shield Grajano d'Asti. It confused him, and turning round, he saw, not two paces from him, the husband of Ginevra, who stood with the rest listening to his words. This

sudden and unexpected discovery took from the close of his words the sting he had designed to give them. By his hearers who knew not his secret history, this embarrassment was attributed to a cause too far from the truth, not to do a wrong to the honor of Fieramosca. A sneer was seen on the face of more than one of the French officers; and they whispered among themselves, that little was to be feared from a man who trembled at the name of "battle." He saw their sneers and heard their whispers, and he felt a torrent of fire streaming through his cheeks—but he calmed his agitation by inwardly saying:—"When the trial comes, they'll see if I tremble."

The answer of the Duke was not wanting either in words or presumption; for even he had been deceived by the manner of the Italian, into a false estimate of his courage. In a few minutes this parliament ended, and the two messengers were offered refreshments for themselves and their horses in a neighboring camp.

Grajano had also recognized Fieramosca, and when he left the presence of the Duke, he followed him. He approached him and saluted him with the air of a man who values more the gifts of fortune, than those of virtue. When he knew him he was a poor knight, nor did he now appear to him to have very materially bettered his circumstances since that time.

"Oh!" said he, "Sig. Giovanni! * * * No, * Sig. * * Motte

* * * devil take it, I don't remember your name * * But no
matter * * And so those who die not, meet again!"

"Exactly," answered Fieramosca, who, notwithstanding the generosity of his character, could not repress his vexation on seeing one he believed to be in the other world, still living—the rightful possessor of her he loved better than life. He tried hard to think of something that would cut off the edge of that "exactly," but it was a fruitless attempt, and he kept silent. But Grajano was not a man of sensibility enough to trouble himself about matters of etiquette, and finding he was obliged to do the talking, he continued: "Well, what are we doing? For Spain, ha?"

To Ettore these interrogations in the plural seemed to savor too much of impudence, and he replied:

"What are we doing? You, I can't say—I bear a lance with Sig. Prospero Colonna."

"Ah! you don't forget the proverb," said the Piedmontese laughing. "'Orsin, Colonna and Frangipano exact to-day, to-morrow pay."

This distich was current at that time among the fortune-seeking soldiery of Italy, and originated in the lack of money so common to the Barons of the Campagna of Rome, who had made themselves more notorious for grasping after the goods of others than being punctual in paying their soldiers.

But Fieramosca was in no mood for joking at this moment, and made no reply, except to put a courteous inquiry for his health, and to ask him why he had abandoned the service of

Valentino.

"Oh!" answered Grajano, "the reason is, he expects too much of us, and keeps too much meat boiling, and if the Pope happens to die to-day or to-morrow, they'll all be on his shoulders at once, and make him pay back principal and interest. But enough! It's better to say neither good nor evil of that gentleman. But now I'm contented where I am, and I would not change places with the Pope himself."

While this dialogue was going on they reached the tent, where they found breakfast spread for them. When the meal was done and the table removed, they were summoned by the Duke for the answer to the challenge. As in duty bound it was full of pride and boasting. The French were always ready for battle, and wished the number had been thirteen to ten, an unlucky number chosen to foretell wo to the Italians.

A sealed letter to Gonzales was consigned to the messengers, and on another sheet the list of the combatants chosen

by the French was written.

They went back to their tent and waited for their horses to come up. In the meantime flasks of wine were brought in, and drank in the company of several knights, among whom was Bajardo. When they had finished their wine Bajardo requested Fieramosca to show him the list, and Ettore took it from his doublet and handed it to him. They all gathered around Bajardo while he read the following names:

Charles de Tourges, Marc de Frignes, Giraut de Forses, Mar tellini de Lambris, Pierre de Liaye, Jacques de la Fontaine Eliot de Baraut, Jean de Landes, Sacet de Tacet, Guy de la Mothe, Jacques de Guignes, Nante de la Fraise, Claude Grajan d'Asti.

"Claudio Grajano d'Asti!" exclaimed Fieramosca, gazing

on him with astonishment.

"Yes, Claudio Grajano d'Asti," the knight himself replied, "perhaps you think he's not fit to appear in such glorious company!"

"But tell me, Monsieur Claude, do you know why this com-

bat is to take place?"

"What? Do you think I am deaf? To be sure I do."

"Know, then, that the Italians are branded by the French as poltroons and traitors; and this is the reason why we give the challenge. Now, for God's sake, tell me what country you belong to?"

"I hail from Asti."

"And is not Asti in Piedmont? And Piedmont, is it in Italy or France? And being yourself an Italian soldier, can you lift your sword with the French against the honor of the Italians?"

As he uttered these words, Fieramosca's eyes flashed fire, and he would have given vent to his passion in more violent language; but he remembered the vow which hindered him from lifting sword against this man. But Grajano, who was a thousand miles from divining the thoughts of Fieramosca, could not understand at first where so many questions were to end. He at last made out to get it into his brain, when Ettore had done; and he thought the talk he had listened to was the sheerest nonsense in the world. Hardly deigning to reply directly to the point in question, he turned round to his companions, and said with a laugh—

"O, dear—just listen to this! One would say this was the very first day he ever took a lance in his hand. I hold in my pocket the Italians—Italy and he who wishes them well—I fight for those who pay me! Don't you know, my beautiful boy, that for us soldiers, where we find bread, there is our

country?"

"I do not call myself beautiful boy: I am known by the name of Ettore Fieramosca," he replied-for he could no longer restrain his indignation—"and I know nothing of the pol-troonery you speak of. And were it not * * *" Here his hand flew almost involuntarily to the hilt of his sword-but he soon withdrew it; and he continued to speak with the firm set face of a man forced to swallow his own bitter indignation.

"One thing, by heavens, I cannot bear!-that these noble gentlemen, and you, Monsieur Bajardo, who are the first man in the world in our profession, and the bravest and most loyal, should have to listen to an Italian vituperate his country. But

who knows not that traitors grow in all countries?"

"Traitor thou art!" cried out the Piedmontese, in a voice of thunder. Both of them laid their hands on their swords; but they did not entirely unsheathe them - for multitudes on all sides rushed forward and separated them, remembering that the person of a herald is held sacred, and can neither insult another, nor be insulted himself. The cries and the tumult were excessive; but the voice of Bajardo, heard above all the rest, restored order, and Grajano was removed by force from the spot.

After sheathing his sword, which he drove violently into its scabbard by a blow with his hand upon the hilt, Fieramosca turned to Bajardo, and excused himself for what had taken place. He, in return, laid his two hands on his shoulders, and looked him so full in the face that the young knight half blushed, and let his eyes fall. They stood so for a moment; and then, kissing Ettore's forehead, he said to him, "Blessed be the woman who gave you birth!"

One hour after, the drawbridge of the gate of Barletta was

lowered for Ettore and Brancaleone to enter the city.

CHAPTER VII.

The morning of the day we have spoken of, which had been occupied by the Italians in preparing for the battle, was not lost by the guests, who the evening before occupied the chambers over the kitchen in the inn of the Sun. Their names, a secret unknown to all in Barletta saving the Capo Squadra Boscherino, shall not be such to our readers. They were Cæsar Borgia, Duke Valentino, and Don Michele da Corella, one of his condottiere.

To compare these villains to wild beasts the most malignant, and the foes of everything living, would be too feeble an image. These act from instinct, and instinct obeys its own limits. But what limit can be assigned to the evil deeds of perverse human hearts, guided by ingenuity of the most diabolical subtleness, furnished with power and with valor (for too true it is, not all villains are cowards), and enormous wealth?

The son of Alexander VI., the terror of Italy and of every man in it who possessed gold, titles, or a lovely wife or daughter, was now almost alone in a miserable house, and in the midst of thousands, who would have given their lives to have wreaked their vengeance on his head.

Those who know not what security a mind strongly tempted, allied with a cold and calculating judgment, can find in itself, would give to such confidence as this the name of temerity. But the Duke was no stranger to himself, and weighing in a balance the danger with the gain he hoped to reap by coming to Barletta—found the chances in his own favor. Two motives influenced him to take this step. One was to find Ginevra, who he had many reasons to believe was certainly with

Fieramosca; and if we cannot suppose such a man would esteem her above all other women in the world, it may at least be safely asserted it had aroused all his passion to find his well laid plot utterly defeated. The other motive was political, and to give our readers a clear idea of it, we must divert their attention for a moment to the dark and subtle workings of the politics of that age.

The power of the Borgia family, which had its origin in the elevation of Cardinal Rodrigo Lenzuoli to the Pontifical throne, had been so fearfully augmented by arms, temporal and spiritual, by intrigues and treacheries, by marriage, alliances, and the aid of France, that the suspicions of every Prince and every Republic of Italy had become roused against them. At first a cardinal, but malcontent with the pay of the purple. Cæsar Borgia formed the purpose of seizing on the entire estate of his father, to reap by a single swing of his arm the fruit of their common crimes. The Duke of Candia, his brother, gonfalonier of the Holy See, to whom the Pontiff was resolute to give a kingdom in Italy, was the only obstacle that could now thwart his ambition. A poniard paid by the cardinal, or, as some suppose, wielded by his own hand, disposed of this obstacle in a single night. A poor laborer, who guarded the coalboats at Ripetta, saw three men come down to the bank of the river. One of them was on horseback—it was the cardinal, and lying across his horse with a man at the head and another at his feet, was borne the corpse of his brother; they threw it into the Tiber, washed off the blood-stains from the pommel of his saddle, and disappeared in a dark lane.

A month afterwards, the Duke of Valenza threw aside the purple and was on a battle-horse at the head of an army. By resorting in one place to force and another to treachery, he had got possession of Faenza, Cesina, Forli, La Romagna, a portion of La Marca, Camerino and Ubino. But the means by which he won, and the arts by which he maintained his ill-gotten power, the universal outrage he had perpetrated, roused against him universal indignation, which only waited an occasion to burst forth. This might be furnished in two ways—by the death of his father, or the abandonment of the French.

The age of the Pope and the fluctuating fortunes of the French arms, admonished him to provide himself with other resources

against the day these should fail.

His penetrating eye, which nothing could elude, the scrutinizer of every sign, and the diviner of the darkest and most hidden heart, laid open to him clearly the condition of Italy. He well knew the valor and impetuosity of the French, which could win a decisive engagement on the field of battle, but never support the harassings of a long and difficult war. He foresaw that Gonzales alone would be able to prostrate their power; and his valor, his prudence, and his invincible perseverance, had already threatened to lay the lilies of France in the dust. He saw the wisdom of attempting to bind that man to himself by some link which would hold up his fortunes, if his old allies failed him. Such a dangerous attempt, which, if the very breath of it reached the French, would defeat all his scheme, could be entrusted to no one, and for these reasons he had secretly left Sinigaglia and come to Barletta.

It was now an hour before day-break, and Valentino, whose iron nerves scarcely knew the necessity of sleep, left his bed and called up Don Michele, who was already awake waiting

his signal, and handing him a letter, said:

"This to Gonzales. He will give thee a salva-condotta. If he inquire for me I am not in Barletta, but not far off. Last night from those soldiers revelling below, I learned all about Ginevra. Now I am sure Fieramosca has her with him, and not far off, and I presume in the place where he goes by sea Before vespers I must know where it is. Find Fieramosca, and take care they don't escape me."

Don Michele received the letter and orders of his master without a word of reply. He returned to his chamber, dressed himself, and at daylight he flung his cloak and hood about him,

and started for the castle.

As Don Michele left the inn, the Duke stood at the window. He followed him with a malicious eye, and his face wore an expression that in any other man would have presaged death. And yet of all the villains he had in his service—and he had many that were the most notorious—none could read the soul

of all his enterprises like the man he was watching; and if confidence can be placed by a fiend in one of his own species, certain it is he had given proof to his master of his fidelity on many critical occasions. But for the very reason he had been placed by him under the greatest obligations, and could not dismiss him from his post without cutting off his own right arm. Cæsar Borgia hated him. Little was known of his origin. He was supposed to be a Navarrese, and in consequence of his having entered the service of the Duke, a tale was current of a strange act of vengeance said to have been perpetrated by him on his own brother, in the manner we shall relate.

Don Michele had a young and beautiful wife, and a younger brother of his, unmarried, lived with him in his house. The charms of his sister-in-law so entirely captivated the heart of the youth, that he threw aside all decorum, won her affection, and consummated it all by a guilty union. But their practices were discovered by a maid in the family, who revealed everything to the husband. He watched his opportunity and surprised them. Drawing a dagger he rushed upon them at the moment and attempted to slay them both, but they escaped from his hands only slightly wounded. So deeply incensed was he at this insult, that he put himself on the track of his brother, who had fled with his wife to a place of security, resolute to shed his blood at all hazards. Hearing he had sworn to kill him, the young man contrived, by disguising himself, to elude his search for several years, and at last the injured man, giving up all hope of ever wreaking his vengeance, was, by the workings of this fiendish passion, brought almost to the grave.

In the meantime, a jubilee was held in the year 1485, and in the city where Don Michele resided, processes and penances were made, and exhortations delivered in the public squares, to incite the people to lay aside all their animosities. Many reconciliations took place, and even Don Michele himself resolved to forget all his revenge, and devote himself to the service of God. He sent to his brother the most solemn assurances of his forgiveness, but they had no effect, for he had determined

never to put himself in his power. At the close of the Holy year Don Michele, who had consumed it all in ceaseless pen ances, abandoned the world entirely, and entering a monastery of Scalze, passed his novitiate and took the solemn vows. He was sent by his superiors through Spain, and at last to Rome for the study of theology, where he became a celebrated Doctor of the church, and returning to his native city with the reputation of a holy life, he was admitted to the priesthood. He celebrated the first Mass with all the pomp and crowd of people, friends and relations, common on such occasions. At the conclusion of these holy functions, he retired to the sacristy and seated himself (according to the custom) upon a stool with a large company of friends and kinsmen around him, who came up one after another to embrace him and kiss his hand.

He had been heard by everybody often to lament the hatred he had so many years cherished against his brother-that he had no desire in the world, but to obtain an entire oblivion of the past, and as he was the servant of God, he humiliated himself first. Moved at last by the prayers of all his kinsmen, the brother had resolved to present himself with the rest on this solemn occasion, and he now appeared before him. The priest greeted him with tenderness, and spoke to him with the utmost affection, throwing his arms around him and pressing him to his heart. His brother's head was seen to fall, his knees gave way under him, and giving a loud shriek, he fell to the ground. The priest brandished in the air a glittering poniard, which in that embrace he had driven to his brother's heart, and kissing the reeking blade, he cried out as he dashed his foot against the bleeding corpse, "I am revenged at last," and disappeared. The horror-stricken crowd were so petrified with consternation, not a finger was lifted against the murderer.

A price was instantly set on his head, and he fled from country to country, till he at last took refuge in Rome, and Cæsar Borgia saved his life. This personage troubled himself very little about the virtues of his protegé; he made him the

agent of his most atrocious deeds, and the villain monk soon became the soul of all Borgia's infernal crimes.

When he reached the gate of the castle, he was asked by the guard the business that brought him; he showed a small box he held under his arm, saying, he had just arrived from the Levant, and sought Gonzales to offer to him a collection of the rarest remedies, secrets against spells, and a hundred other lies. One of the soldiers, after scrutinizing him closely, beckoned to him to follow him.

They entered a large court-yard shut in by lofty buildings of ancient architecture. The chambers of each story opened on terraces over the court, supported by columns of greystone, supported by circular or hexagonal arches according to the respective periods of their construction. A large number of round towers crowned with battlements a coda di rondine, built of antique red brick, rose at unequal distances, high over the roof of the castle. On the summit of the largest of the towers, called the Tower of the Clock, a large yellow and vermillion standard was waving, the banner of Spain.

They mounted the first story by a flight of steps on the outside, which conducted to a large parapet, ornamented with a row of lions, rudely sculptured in stone, and entered a hall, where Don Michele was left by his guide, who said to him:

"When the Gran Capitano comes out, you can speak to him."

" And if you please, when will that be?"

"When he pleases," bluntly replied the soldier, as he went about his business."

Don Michele knew very well that patience is the divinity of ante-chambers, so he was silent. Seeing a company of knights assembled at the end of the hall near the great windows, which opened on the sea, scrutinizing him closely, he began to pass away his time in loitering about to look at the old pictures, which lined the walls. By degrees he came nearer and nearer to the company. "Who knows," thought he to himself, "but I may make a good hit here?" At last he

artfully seized an opportunity of throwing a word into their conversation, and in a few moments he was talking with as much freedom as though he had been one of their own company.

That fortune which the brave invoke so often without effect, served him a good deal better than he expected. Eyeing this company of knights with a keen glance, he singled out one of their number who was a man about fifty years old, tall and thin, with a shoulder rising a little out of symmetry, who carried at his belt a large sword, that hung out behind his cloak, and swung against the shins of the men back of him, as he went on scraping and bowing, recognizing the quality of each man's station, and particularly those of the highest rank. His eyebrows, which arched up half the expanse of his forehead, and his two grey full and wondering eyes, gave to his lean face an expression of curiosity mingled with simplicity, which appeared more strikingly in the everlasting smile of complacency, which accompanied all his conversation. This good man was Don Litterio Defastidiis, Podestà of Barletta, and he was at once the most curious, the most vain and the most troublesome man in the world.

Don Michele, who was a subtle physiognomist, saw in a moment he had found his man. He accosted him with that courteous and open manner he knew so well how to counterfeit when it suited his purpose, and began to converse with him. The Podestà never closed a speech without the necessary joke (and our reader will most certainly understand what we allude to if he has ever whiled away half an hour after dinner under the porch of an apothecary's shop in some small country town in the kingdom of Naples), and he, moreover, always expected you to laugh at his wit. Don Michele was now, of course, all the while bursting with laughter, and telling him—"I never saw before the funniest man in the world!" "Oh! this is rich!" "That's curious enough;" and in less than half an hour they were the greatest cronies in the world.

At this point, Prospero Colonna, who came out from the presence of Gonzales with the salva-condotta for the combat,

passed through the hall, and they all bowed him a reverence. Don Michele asked who the Baron was, and Don Litterio, no friend to taciturnity, now began one of his long yarns, and told all about the challenge, and what was said at the supper of Fieramosca, and his love adventures. Don Michele, who found more fish coming into his net than he had hoped for, hastily demanded,

"This young man, * * what do you call him?"

"Fieramosca."

"Ah, this Fieramosca is, without doubt, one of your most excellent friends?"

"That he is;—my bosom-friend, and the friend of Signor Prospero, and in fact, everybody loves him. * * He's one of the finest young fellows in the world. * * We meet every evening in the house of Colonna, or in the piazza! Pity he has such a sad look; never laughs—never! You see him always going round with the face of an excommunicated man, who makes your very heart ache. And I! why, I've known all about this secret of his for half an age, but they never would believe me. These soldiers are curious fellows—they think it's a shame to fall in love. In a single word last night, this French Baron, who knew him at Rome, let the cat out of the bag, and now it's certain,—the old proverb is true:

"Love's a scab, a coughing cold, Who has it not, need not be told."

This pleasantry of the Podestà was received by D. Michele with a burst of laughter, which he was obliged to repeat three or four times, as it happened to please Don Litterio to repeat his proverb just as often.

After the joke was passed, Don Michele continued: "I could cure such love by a single sight of the man, so entirely, that the poor victim would no longer remember it himself. But" *

* * here followed a pause to be asked to go on.

"Cure him?" exclaimed the Podestà, "how do you want to cure him? This is a sort of fever that takes other medicine than what comes from the apothecaries."

"And I tell you, I only want to see one of his friends who

will help me, and I'll lose my head if I prove a liar."

Don Litterio looked at him a moment to see if he was jesting or speaking in earnest, and there's no need of saying that Don Michele knew what sort of a look to put on then. When the doubting Podesta was half satisfied, he continued: "If that's

all you want, you can have it."

And he chuckled with inward satisfaction to think he should have the glory of this wonderful cure, as he had boasted the honor of being the first to discover the disease. And, without doubt, the man who could work the miracle of making Fieramosca a good, jovial fellow, fond of mirth, would have been lauded to heaven by everybody who knew him. He, therefore, began to ply Don Michele, to find out how he was to bring about so difficult a matter; and the latter held back till he had been importuned for some time, for he was particularly anxious to keep out of a pitfall just at this crisis. But, at last, he yielded to his entreaties, and replied, that when he was in the country of the Turks, he had seen used, and possessed himself of a wonderful secret which could overcome the most passionate love; and it was not long before he had so entirely made himself master of the credulous brain of the poor Podestà, that he thanked his stars for the day that brought them together.

"It all depends," said he, "upon one thing-I must see his beloved five minutes—then leave the rest to me."

"But really, as for that, you take me so suddenly. I could not promise it exactly; for, to tell you the truth, I don't know her myself. But, if she be in Barlettta, or within ten miles of the place, have no trouble about it. Twenty-four hours won't go by before I give you some information. Now I'll hunt up Giuliano * * he's the knave of the town-a very devil to know everything."

"And where shall I see you?" asked Don Michele

"Wherever you like."

"Well, then, if you say so, we'll meet at the inn of the Sun, about an hour before sun-down."

"We understand each other," answered Don Litterio, and leaving Don Michele astonished at his good luck, the Podestà hurried away to the palace of the Comune, to find Giuliano; but, with the permission of our reader, we shall not accompany him, for we should hate to leave Don Michele to be too much annoyed by his long ante-chamber.

He waited some time, without success, for Gonzales to appear, and at last obtained permission to be introduced.

The Spanish captain was leaning against a window, wrapped in a robe of satin of vermillion, lined with grey minevre; and his august presence, his lofty forehead, and his piercing eye, and finally, the fame of the great man, awoke in the breast of the Condottiere of Cæsar Borgia that sense of fear, and I might almost say of meanness, which the profligate always feel when they stand before a virtuous man. He made an humble and profound salutation, and said:

"Glorious Signore! The importance of the message with which I am intrusted, has made it necessary to present myself in your august presence under a name which is not my own. If in this I have offended you, I humbly crave pardon. But, as you will know, the secret was too important to be entrusted even to your own guards. It could only be communicated

directly to your glorious honor."

To these words Gonzales briefly replied, that no confidence reposed in him should suffer, and requested him to explain himself. Don Michele consigned the Duke's letter. He obtained a salva-condotta, and taking it to his master he gave him the assurance that the secret of his arrival at Barletta would be safe in the keeping of Gonzales. He also informed him of the fair prospect of the researches of his new friend, the Podestà. Valentino, pleased with the favorable turn his affairs seemed to be taking, drew his hood over his eyes, and wrapping himself in his mantle, left the inn. Taking a boat, he rowed round behind the castle, where Gonzales has promised Don Michele he would have a person in readiness to meet him. A small gate was opened, through which he was conducted, and passing up a secret stairway he was led through a succession of dark passages till he reached the private room of the Spanish captain.

It seems to us unnecessary to give a minute relation of what passed at this interview. In substance Valentino exposed

with an astonishing clearness, a summary of Italian affairs, the forces, the hopes and the fears of the Italian States. He gave him to understand he would gladly have allied himself with the fortunes of Spain; professing to be drawn to that side by the desire of bettering the condition of Italy, whose wounds he hoped would cease to bleed if once the Spanish dominion could be established in the peninsula; and he succeeded, by his open candor, which he could assume to perfection, in leaving upon the mind of his listener a better opinion of himself than fame had awarded him. He offered to make a league with Spain, which should be ratified by the Pope, and into which the Venetians should be admitted if they desired it, by which the contracting parties should bind themselves reciprocally to aid each other in all their undertakings, and the confederation was to be made public only when the Spaniards should have become masters of two-thirds of the kingdom of Naples. He proposed with the forces he had then already gathered to make the invasion of Tuscany; showing that the Florentines were the best friends of the French in Italy, and the advantage they would mutually derive by humbling so powerful a state. He added he esteemed it important to the interests of their league to gain the alliance of the Pisans, who would court their aid to enable them to redress the wrongs perpetrated against them by the Florentine Republic, over which an extension of power would make them most vigilant guardians.

Gonzales had no essential objections to these proposals, and the subtle genius of Cæsar Borgia knew how to embellish with a striking light these matters, which were in a great part true. But the Spaniard knew the man he was dealing with, and found it no easy matter to trust him an inch out of his sight. He determined for the present to give him no definitive answer, and replied he must take council of his confidential advisers before he could adopt such a resolution. But he was not wanting to Valentino either in fair words or courteous offers. He conducted him to a suite of rooms on the ground floor, which looked out on the sea, offering them to his service during the time he remained in Barletta; and placed at his disposition

some of his most confidential attendants, who treated him with all the honor due to the son of a Pope.

It was towards evening when Fieramosca and Brancaleone reached the gates of the city. As soon as they entered, a crowd of officers, men-at-arms and soldiers, gathered around them, augmented by all they met in the streets, each one ambitious to be the first to know the answer of the French. "How have matters gone?" "What was their answer?" "Who are to be the combatants?" "When and where will the combat be?" But the friends smiled at their curiosity, and told them—"Come on with us to the castle, and you'll know it all." They entered the castle, and were brought into the presence of Gonzales. Fieramosca delivered to him the letter of the Duke de Nemours, which he read in a loud voice. He told them the challenge was accepted, but a free field denied. This refusal appeared strange, and the great captain said—

"I did not suppose the French would have resorted to subterfuges to escape the combat; but the free field you shall have—I promise it to you" And calling a secretary, he said, "Write to the Duke de Nemours, that he may lay aside his fears, for his difficulty is removed—I offer him a truce till the combat is over: and, finally, that within two days I expect the arrival of my daughter Elvira, when I intend to give a little fête; and if he will condescend, while our arms are idle, to join in our festi-

vities, it will add no little to our gaiety."

Between the writing, the sending the letter, and reception of the answer, hardly two hours passed. The Duke de Nemours accepted the invitation, and the truce was proclaimed throughout the city that evening, with the sounding of the trumpet, together with the names of the Italian combatants; to whom, to complete the number, the following three names were joined: Ludovico Amindle da Terni, Mariano da Sarni, and Giovanni Cupoccio, Romano.

CHAPTER VIII.

The convent on the little island which lay between Mount Gargano and Barletta, was dedicated to Saint Ursula. Its walls, at the present day, present only a vast ruin, covered with thorns and overrun with ivy. But at the epoch of our history, they were still strong, and formed an edifice of sombre appearance, raised by the late remorse of a princess of the house of Anjou, who came here to end in holiness a life which had been wasted in licentiousness and ambition. A more tranquil or enchanting solitude could not have been found in the wide world.

On a rock which rose about twenty cubits above the level of the sea, there was a table of fertile soil, five hundred paces in circumference. On an angle nearest the mainland, stood the church. Its entrance was formed by a beautiful portico, supported by delicate columns of russet granite. The interior, divided into three aisles, with sharp hexagonal arches, resting on slender sculptured columns, ornamented, received its light from long gothic windows of painted glass, representing the history of the miracles of the patron saint. The gallery behind the main altar was circular, and adorned with mosaics, inlaid with gold. The Eternal Father was represented in glory; and at his feet Saint Ursula, with the eleven thousand virgins, borne by angels,

The church, separated some distance from the convent, was almost always empty. Only at stated hours of the day and the night, the nuns assembled to chant their choruses. It was now towards evening. The vesper-hymn was chanting behind the main altar, in its measured, soothing monotony. A woman knelt praying by the side of a tomb of white marble, yellowed by years, and covered with a canopy also of marble, adorned

with carved leaves, and animals of the Gothic style, and here reposed the ashes of the founder of the convent.

This female, clothed in a veil of the color of the marble, which extended to the ground, was pale and immovable, and would have seemed, as she knelt in prayer, but a statue placed there by the sculptor in her orison, had not two long locks of chestnut hair appeared without the veil, and her face, which at times was lifted to Heaven, had not revealed blue eyes, from which beamed all the intense fervor of an earnest prayer.

Poor Ginevra (for it was her) had reason to pray, for she found herself in circumstances where a woman's heart must have other help than her own, to conquer herself. She repented, but too late, she had ever consented to follow Fieramosca, and unite her fortunes, in some measure, with those of a man whom prudence and duty required her to fly from, above all men in the world. She repented of not having taken pains to inform herself of her husband, if he were dead or alive. But reason told her what had been too long delayed, could still be done. But her heart answered it is too late; and this too late sounded to her like the sentence of doom. The days dragged on endless, filled with anguish and bitterness. Stripped of every hope of escaping from her torment, except by yielding herself to one of the two passions that consumed her, her constitution was fast sinking under the insupportable weight of the struggle.

The morning hours, and those near mid-day, passed less heavily. She worked at embroidery, she had her books, and the garden of the convent for walking. But the night! Thoughts the most dark and cares the most distracting seemed like those insects which come out in swarms, when the sun goes down, to multiply and rush upon her without number at that hour. The church then was her only refuge. She found no joy there, nor peace, but she at least found some moments of consolation. Her prayer was brief, and seldom varied. "Most Holy Virgin," she said, "help me not to love him," and sometimes she added, "Give me courage to seek out Grajano, and to desire to find him." But how often did her heart fail her, when she attempted to offer this second petition!

Repeating continually these words, she sometimes found her soul all absorbed in Fieramosca, at the very moment her lips prayed for power to forget him. And then she sighed and wept, but, alas! she discovered what was the deepest emotion of her heart. But this very day, however, by one of those strange fluctuations of our nature, she felt herself able at last to choose the path of duty. The thought of an illness that her failing health told her was near; the thought of a death made terrible by the reproaches of conscience coming over her, in a moment of wavering, weighed down the balance, and determined her to learn something of Grajano, and return to him at all hazards, if she could discover him. And had Fieramosca been present, she would have declared to him her resolution, without any hesitation. "But," said she, rising from her knees to leave the church, "this evening he will come, and he shall know it all."

When the chorus was finished, the nuns went silently out of the small door which opened on the court, and returned to their cells. Ginevra followed them. She entered a terrace, as pure and clean as a mirror, which encircled a small garden, in the centre of which there was a well covered with a small roof, which rested on four stone pillars. Traversing a long passage, she came out in a court behind. The lower side was formed by a small house, without a cloister, but separated from the rest of the building, and here all visitors were placed. Here Ginevra lodged with her companion, who had been rescued from the sea by Fieramosca. They occupied two or three rooms, which, according to the custom of convents, had no communication with each other, except by means of a common hall. Entering the room where they were accustomed to pass the greater part of the day together, she found Zoraide occupied at her embroidery-frame, singing as she worked an Arabic ballad, full of those minor notes so common in the songs of the people of the east. She looked for a moment on the work, and then drew a sigh (it was a mantle of blue satin, embroidered with silver, they were working together for Fieramosca), and then she took her seat by a balcony shaded with vine-leaves, and looked towards Barletta. The sun was

already hid behind the hills of Puglia, but his fires still lingered on the vapor clouds that lay off on the bosom of heaven, and shone like goldfish swimming in a sea of fire. Their gorgeous image came up in long lines from the waters, ruffled here and there by the barks of the fishermen, which a light eastern breeze was bringing to the shore. Her eye was fixed on the Mole of the port, which was full in view, from which she had so often seen a light bark leap out upon the sea, and approach the island. And now she looked more anxiously for the little boat than ever; for she felt it would bring her a decision, and whatever that decision might be, it would in her present state be gain to her. But these moments of expectation seemed long and bitter. Would that Ettore were already there! Would he had already heard those words, so hard to pronounce! For if he should delay, or fail to come, will she have the resolution to pronounce them to-morrow?

A speck obscurely seen in the distance, hardly changing place, gradually approached the beach. In a quarter of an hour it had reached the land, and although it was indistinctly seen to be a boat with a single oarsman, Ginevra knew what it was, and felt her heart beat quicker. By a sudden revolution of all her ideas, the possibility of revealing to him the purpose she had but a moment before felt irrevocably fixed, seemed to have fled from her for ever. She would willingly have seen that little boat turn back again, but no—on, on, it came; it was already close to the island, for she could hear the oars dip, and leave the water.

"Zoraide, he's come!" she exclaimed, turning to her companion who slightly raised her head, and replied only by a sign of her face, and her eyes again fell upon her work. Ginevra descended by a flight of steps cut in the rock, to the spot where the boat was to be moored, and reached the edge of the water just as Fieramosca laid his oars in the bottom, and the prow struck the rock.

But if Ginevra lacked the courage to declare her resolution. Fieramosca, who had still more important secrets to unfold, felt no better prepared to make his announcement. For a long time, far from the scene of the war in which Grajano had

enlisted, he had received no intelligence of his fate. Some soldiers, who had returned from Romagna, either badly informed, or changing the name, had told Ettore he was slain in battle. He felt too hastily inclined to believe the report, for he should have resolutely rejected all such rumors, till he had been convinced by indubitable evidence. But it seldom happens we desire to see clearly when we apprehend a discovery fatal to ourselves; he had therefore eluded the truth, and indulged in his belief down to that very day when his own eyes had finally, and in a single glance, undeceived him. He had returned to Barletta torn by the inward struggle, whether or not he should reveal everything at once to Ginevra. If he did, it would separate him from her at once, and for ever; and if he did not, he felt he would be guilty of wrong, and besides, how could he hope to conceal an event like this from her who had so long shared all his confidence?

In this state of conflict and uncertainty, he reached the island, and he had not yet fixed his purpose when he stood by the side of Ginevra. But being forced to decide yes or no, he fell upon the latter alternative for the moment, saying to himself, there will be time to decide afterwards.

"I have come late this evening," he said as he mounted the stairs, "but great events have happened to-day, and I have news to tell thee."

"News!" exclaimed Ginevra. "Oh! tell me is it good or bad?"

"Good news! and with the help of God, in a few days it shall be better still."

They now reached the lawn before the church. At the extreme verge where the rock shelved off into the sea, there was a low wall of protection, shaded by cypresses, in the centre of which stood a wooden cross with rude stools around it Both of them sat down under the light of the moon, which had already eclipsed the purple twilight, and Fieramosca began his narration.

"Rejoice, my Ginevra! this has been a day of glory for Italy and for us; and if God withdraw not his smile from a just cause, it shall prove the beginning of brighter glory. But now

is the hour for strength, and the day has come when thou must show thyself an heroic example of the women of Italy."

"Tell me what it is," she answered as she gazed earnestly in his face, as if to read beforehand the proof of courage he expected from her. "I am a woman I know, but I have resolution."

"I know it, Ginevra, and I would sooner doubt the sun will rise to-morrow, than doubt thee;" * * and he narrated the challenge, explaining minutely its origin; the visit to the French camp; the return and the preparations making for the combat. And how bold were his words, and how deeply his love of country and glory were kindled; and how much the presence of Ginevra brightened the flame, those readers know who have felt the pulse beat quicker, when they spoke of generous deeds face to face with a woman capable of the same exalted sentiments.

As Ettore went on with his narration, his enthusiasm, his descriptions and his manner growing more and more fervid, Ginevra breathed quicker, and her bosom, like a sail shaken by violent gusts of wind, heaved violently with the impetuous rush of feelings discordant but not unworthy of her; and her eves, which took their language from the words of Fieramosca, flashed with fire. When he finished, she laid her white delicate hand on the hilt of Ettore's sword, and lifting her beaming face, she said, "Oh! had I too thy arm! Could I but wield this blade which I can hardly raise, thou shouldst not go alone to the combat! No! and it would not be mine to say the Italians are victorious, but he is left on the field. Oh! I know, I know what I say, conquered I would never return-" and here, struck by the thought of the approaching danger, she could no longer restrain her tears, and they fell in streams upon Ettore's hand.

"For whom dost thou weep, Ginevra? Dost thou wish for aught in the world this challenge had not been given?"

"Oh! No, Ettore! never, never—Do me not this wrong," and trying to check her tears she continued: "I don't weep * * * see * * I've done * * it was only for a moment." And then she said with a smile which her eyelashes still wet made more beautiful; "I wished to be too brave and talk about

swords and battle, and I am punished for my folly—but I deserved it."

This last phrase was overheard by Zoraide, who came up with a basket of fruit, cakes, honey and other delicacies. She carried it on her left arm, and in her right hand she bore a flask of white wine. Her dress was made after the fashion of the Franks, but her choice of the most dazzling colors, and her capricious manner of arranging them, showed the taste of the barbarous country that gave her birth. But her head-dress was completely Eastern, and the folded scarf hung down on her breast. She had the high eyebrow, the oval contour; and, if I dare say it, that brunette tint, slightly gold-tinged, which distinguishes the tribes around the Caucasus. In her amiable moods, sometimes flashed out rays of a savage nature, a fearless frankness despising submission. She took the contents of her basket, and spread a collation on one of the seats on which she had laid a pure white napkin.

"Oh yes," said Ettore gaily, to chase away the sad thoughts he read on the brow of Ginevra, "let us be lighthearted while we can, and let the world roll on as it will." And they tried to eat.

"The old proverb," continued Fieramosca, "says, one should not talk about death at the table. So we'll say nothing of the challenge. We'll talk about something joyful. We shall soon be in the midst of banquetings. Signor Gonzales has proclaimed a tournament, a bull-fight, comedies, and balls and dinners. It will be a scene of enchantment."

"What does this mean? And the French?" asked Ginevra.

"And the French? They'll be there too. A truce has been offered, and they'll not be villains enough to refuse it. These fêtes are to be in honor of the arrival of Lady Elvira, the daughter of the great Captain; and he, who loves her as he does his own eyes, is determined the fête shall be magnificent."

The questions of the two listeners now knew no limits; and Ettore did his best to answer them, alternately replying to each, in the following manner:—but we shall leave the reader to guess the questions from the answers.

"Beautiful! Perfectly beautiful, they all say; with hair which seems like threads of gold."

"She will arrive in a few days."

"She had been left sick at Taranto; and now she's reco-

vered, she rejoins her father."

"Does he love her? Think that he has done for her what he would never have done for himself! In Taranto, exactly—you will have heard the Spanish troops mutinied because they were not paid; and Inigo tells me it's a miracle Gonzales is now alive; for the whole of those devils gathered around him, with their brandished pikes. A certain Yciar, a captain of infantry, as Gonzales cried out he had no money, answered in a loud voice, using obscene and vile words, that his daughter (excuse me) could find it for him. He was silent; the tumult ceased, and everything was quiet during the night. The next morning they came out on the piazza, and what, think you, they saw? This ribald Captain Yciar hanging dead from his own window. And of those who had brandished their pikes around the great Captain's breast, not a hair of their heads was touched. You see if he loves her!"

And in all these little relations the hours had passed by, and

it was already late.

"Now I must go," said Fieramosca; and rising from his seat he was accompanied by the two females, as he took his way slowly back to his boat. Ginevra descended with him to the foot of the rock, and Ettore gave an adieu, as he entered the bark, to Zoraide, who had remained above. She hardly returned it, and disappeared. Ettore thought little of it, but said to Ginevra, "She did not hear me—salute her for me. And now farewell; God knows we shall meet with difficulty during these few days to come. But let it be so—we shall be able to do it in some manner."

His oars struck the water, and his little boat was off. Ginevra mounted the steps and stopped a long while on the summit, watching, as she thought on sadly, the two diverging streams of light that quivered from the wake of the receding bark.

When the last trace of it had faded from the sea, she entered her chamber, and secured with two strong bolts her door for the night.

CHAPTER IX.

From the creation of the world birds have been caught by the fowler in nearly the same snares; and men have always been taken in the same nets. But the most dangerous, perhaps, of all these snares, is the one which calls our self-love

into play.

Don Michele understood this perfectly; and knowing the vulnerable side of the Podestà's nature, had, by a few strokes, got him into his hands. When he left the ante-chamber of Gonzales, to find the servant of the comune, his brain was filled with a thousand wild fancies, and his joy was so unbounded, he could hardly understand, himself, how he had stumbled upon a person who promised him so many wonders. The suspicion, it's true, occasionally flashed on him of his being an impostor; but having no contemptible idea of his own powers of penetration, he said within himself, like all whose lives are passed in being duped, "Deceive me if you can."

He was punctual to his engagement at the inn, but he had nothing to communicate to Don Michele, for the servant, who was in his opinion so wonderful a scrutinizer, had promised

much, done little, and discovered nothing.

At supper that evening his wife and servant-maid soon discovered something important was boiling in his brain, and they attacked him with so furious a volley of questions the poor man could hardly eat a mouthful in peace. It was wonderful he did not let everything out all at once, for it was harder for him to keep a secret, particularly if he thought it could increase his reputation, than for a person to keep from scratching himself who has the itch. In fact something had already escaped him. "Eh! I know it! * * If you only

knew! * if a certain affair of mine only goes well!" and at last alarmed at the danger all at once of revealing the matter, he got up from the table, and snatching up a light, went off to bed.

That night seemed to him a century. At last morning came, and he dressed himself in haste, and went to a barber's shop in the piazza, where Don Michele had promised to meet him. He seated himself on the bench of the shop where every morning the notary, the doctor, the apothecary, and two or three others who constituted the head pictures of Barletta, were sure to assemble. He crossed his legs with one foot moderately raised into the air, his left arm was lying across his breast, and in the hand his right elbow was resting, with the fingers of the other he was making a drum of his chin, as he looked busily first on one side and then on another, and last of all into the air to catch some sign of his friend. The apothecary, the notary, and the rest of the company, had more than once said, "Early risen, Signor Podestà," but finding they had their trouble for their pains, for he hardly made any reply, they kept at a respectful distance, and in an under voice one of them said to the rest, "What the deuce is in the wind this morning?" Don Litterio let them talk on and kept silent, for he could command two faces when necessary-one full of smiles and obsequiousness towards his superiors in rank, the other just as full of arrogance and stiffness towards those who were below him; and this, as everybody knows, is the precious adornment heaven is pleased to bestow upon all the asses in the universe. He had passed half an hour in this manner when he heard a voice at his shoulders:

"Excellency! * * Signor Podestà * * * begging your gracious pardon * * if you would be served * * they were picked this morning with the dew on." He turned and saw the gardener of S. Ursula, Gennaro Rafamillo, who offered him a tenth part of a basket of cherries he came every morning to sell with other fruit in the piazza. He knew from experience this tribute would save him from all trouble of the market tax in selling his fruits.

"I have something else in my head besides thy cherries,"

answered Don Litterio. But after examining the basket, and inflating his cheeks, puffing out by degrees the wind he had gathered, he assumed an air of noble patronage, and taking out three or four vine-leaves, he spread them down on the bench, in the form of a plate, and laid out a fine pile of the cherries and began to eat.

"They are good, eli! True, isn't it? I took some of them last night to Madonna, and she told me she had never seen

finer."

" And who may this Madonna be?"

"Madonna Ginevra; the lady who inhabits the forestiera, and they say she is a very noble lady of Naples, and has, I don't know if it be a brother or a husband here in the service of Sig. Prospero, who comes to visit her almost every day." * * *

The gardener had evidently begun a long story, for laconism was not one of his dominant qualities. But Don Michele had in the mean time come up and was standing unobserved

behind the Podestà.

"Here we are, Sig. Podestà," said he, slapping him on the shoulder. "I've an inkling this fellow could put us in the way—let me manage matters a little." * * And without waiting for ceremony, he began to cross-question Gennaro, and soon discovered he was really on the track of Ginevra. The thread was in his hand, and to a man of his stamp all the rest was moonshine.

To enable him to gain admission to the convent, examine the ground, and arrange matters to get Ginevra into his hand, he said the Podestà could be made of no little service. It was only necessary to win his confidence so entirely, that every vestige of suspicion of the rectitude of his intentions should be obliterated from his brain. He took him aside and said to him:—

"We must have a little talk together. Wait for me at the inn of the Sun, and in the mean time I'll see if this fellow can describe to me the young man who so often visits Ginevra."

Don Litterio accordingly set out for the inn, and conducting the gardener to the station where the guards were changed, which was crowded with officers and soldiers, he asked: "Is he among them?"

Gennaro looked about a little, and seeing Fieramosca, he said:—

"It's him."

Don Michele at last set his eyes upon the man he was in search of. Five minutes after he was with the Podestà at the inn, which was now empty, and they sat down by a table, face to face, with glasses and a bottle of Greek wine between them.

Don Michele, with a very modest face, thus began the conversation:

"The discovery is made. But before we go any further, I must say a couple of words to you. Don Litterio, I've roved round the world, and make a profession of knowing a fine man at first sight, and from the slight intercourse we have had together, I set your head down for one whose superior can't be found."

The Podestà's countenance plainly showed he swallowed the compliment, and he signified as much.

"No, no! compliments aside * * I say what I think. You don't know me yet. If I thought the contrary, I'd out with it Signor Podestà, have patience with me—but your brain is a hot one. If I were an impostor, I would seek some other coadjutor. But as I pretend to be as honest as any other man, come who may, I'm always ready to deal with men, who, like you, keep their eyes open. Now, I'm going to tell you all, and you'll have something more than words to give faith to—you'll see facts, and this will show you you are dealing with an honest man."

Here he began to read off one of his romances. He had been a great sinner, and to obtain pardon, had made a pilgrimage to the Holy Sepulchre. A hermit of Mount Lebanon had finally absolved him, enjoining, as a penance, that he should for seven years wander about the world, and whenever he found an opportunity of doing a good deed, whatever it might be, he was to do it at the cost even of his life—willing always to live poor and humble. He had, therefore, endeavored to possess

mankind of the science and light he had acquired in his long

journeys through Persia, Syria, and Egypt.

"Now," said he, "you will understand the reason why I am so anxious to deliver your friend from that devouring passion, which may, if not cured, end in the eternal damnation of his soul. The female in question is, without doubt, the Madonna Ginevra of S. Ursula. With you it rests to bring us together. You may fear I am a deceiver; and you may fear to introduce one you do not know into that sacred place; and you have a thousand reasons."

Don Litterio here seemed a little disturbed.

"No, I repeat it, you have a thousand reasons to fear. No man bears on his face an indubitable seal of honesty-and, alas! the world is filled with wrong-doers! But when I show you that, with the help of God, I have only to look on the earth to wrench forth treasures from its bowels-to stop the fury of a cannon-ball in its flight, and execute other things esteemed impossible, which you will see me do; all the fruit going to you without my touching a single grain, for I content myself with the mite which sustains my poor life, you'll be forced to exclaim-'Here is one, who might make himself rich, and live in luxury, but he is poor and lives a life of fatigue; therefore, what he declares is true-nor can his integrity with justice be questioned. Two words and I've done. Many have blessed the day they saw me, and you may be one of them. Think of it, and decide soon. The penance I am yet to work out, compels me to rove the world without stopping in any place more than one week."

This speech, to which the Podestà listened with his mouth wide open, without daring to breathe loud, made him ashamed of himself for having conceived an evil thought against the speaker. Nevertheless, to play the wise man still he replied, that if he could see some of the proofs of which he spoke, he would lend him any aid in his power. On this point they were agreed, and parted with the understanding that, as soon as possible, Don Michele would show himself, and, in the meantime, he was to resort to his spells to discover in what part of the neighborhood of Barletta treasures were buried.

Having thus won over the Podestà, and seeing his plot had succeeded to his liking, he began to prepare everything for springing his mine. He hunted up Boscherino, and informed him his aid was necessary in the service of the Duke. He was one of those men who trembled at the very name of Valentino, and without knowing anything of the nature of the service required, he answered—"I'm ready." Don Michele gave him no indication of his desire any farther than to tell him—" Wait for me beyond the gate, on the side of the city which looks out towards Saint Ursula" (the truce between the two armies, accepted by the French Captain, allowed the besieged free intercourse with the surrounding country).

Boscherino was on the spot at the time, as punctually as his guide, who came up carrying under his arm a dress for disguise. Whoever would wish to follow them, must track them along the sea coast a mile beyond the bridge which unites the island to the main land. Here they turned to the left, and threading the winding paths that conducted through a deserted valley they entered an ancient church, abandoned to ruin, which had many years served only as a cemetery. But in order not to repeat this journey, we will wait and make it under the shadow of night, and for doing it we crave the condescension of the reader. We will only say, that about an hour before sundown Don Michele appeared in the piazza unattended. He accosted the Podestà, who was in the shop of the barber, and whispered in his ear:

"The place is found. To-night, as the hour of nine strikes,

I'll be at your door. Don't keep me waiting."

And, in fact, at that hour and that moment Don Michele was at his post, and the Podestà came out. He shut the door carefully, to escape observation; silently and cautiously they skulked through the dark lanes (for there were no lanterns), and soon they were without the city. Straight on they went, and when they heard ten o'clock sound from the castle, in deep tones, almost stifled by the wind, they had already passed Saint Ursula, and were gradually approaching the deserted church, as they wound along the shore of the sea. It was a desolate and sterile plain, over which a few dwarfish shrubs

grew, that only made it seem the more like a wilderness. The narrow path they followed was soon lost in the sand, where, at each step, they sank half up to their knees. At intervals they found the dried up beds of torrents filled with gravel and stones, worn smooth by the flowing of water; but the two pedestrians, who were plodding on their difficult way, were in very different states of mind.

Don Michele, accustomed to walking more by night than by day, led the way with a sure step. The other, who perhaps during his whole life never found himself twice outside the gates of the city when the Ave-Maria sounded, followed on, breathing with difficulty, looking sharply around him, and cursing the hour he left his own house. And, to tell the truth, it was an unlucky hit for him. His fancy was hurrying on from one frightful imagination to another till he trembled with a thousand apprehensions; and not last or least, he was far from his own house in the night time, and alone with a man who, after all, he knew nothing about.

Nevertheless, every once in a little while he tried to rally himself up, and he hummed away, in a low voice, three or four syllables (but for the fifth he had no breath)—then he fancied he heard a strange noise among the bushes; and by the dim light of the moon, struggling through the clouds, he thought he saw at a distance a crouching man, who, on a nearer approach, turned out to be the trunk of a tree or a rock. The next moment he conjured up some strange form or vision of departed souls, and tremblingly muttered a requiem or a de profundis. Such was the pleasant shade of his reveries as they reached the sombre grove, which sheltered the still more gloomy church.

Over the door were painted several skeletons, standing upright, with mitres, diadems and crowns on their heads, and holding in their hands falling scrolls, on which were written Latin verses like the following: Beati mortui qui in Domino moriuntur. Miseremini, mei, &c.: and although, when the moon broke through the opening clouds, the inscriptions could be read with difficulty, these figures, which seemed just like the dead, were sufficient, alone, to produce the desired effect.

Don Michele opened a lantern, and prepared to commence their explorations of this home of the dead. The Podestà had stopped short some paces behind, and when he saw the design of his companion, there issued from his mouth a here? so pitiful, and so charged with consternation, it called a smile to the thin and livid lips of Don Michele.

"All your presence of mind is necessary now, Signore Podestà; for in places like this fear brings little fruit, and very often ends in something dreadful. He who has guided you here works in the name of God, and to show you that his power alone can bring the souls of the departed from the fu-

ture world, let us begin by prayer."

Kneeling down he began to string together miserere and dies illa, to which Don Litterio gave the responses as well as he could; vowing if he ever came out of that place a live man he would light a large candle every Saturday, at Saint Fosca, and fast the Vigils of the Dead. The prayer was finished, and they arose. An old door, half rotted, which hardly supported itself on its hinges, swung open, and nearly fell to the ground, at the touch of Don Michele, and they entered, picking their way among the ruins which obstructed their passage.

The pavement was strewn with the bones of the dead. A coffin, which stood in an angle, worm-eaten and mouldering away, and two or three spades, which had (God knows when) been used to inter the dead, made up the furniture of the place. Several hundred owls, roused by the light of the lantern, began to fly screeching about, flapping their wings against the walls, and sought refuge in an old Gothic tower, whose base stood by

the side of the large altar.

The place, the solitude, the late hour, were such, if not to arouse fear, at least to fill the mind of the bravest man with deathly fancies; and poor Don Litterio, who, when the sun was high in the heavens, had thought of this moment with composure, now found, while it was passing, the important difference between words and deeds.

He stood upon the bones of dead men, which crumbled under his feet, gazing on the walls green with humidity, and in many places still covered with ancient pictures, and standing still in the midst of it all with his hands clasped together, he awaited the end of this infernal scene.

Don Michele laid on the ground a small bundle he had brought with him, from which he took a conjuror's wand, and throwing over him a black garment covered with cabalistic figures, he began with his wand to describe a circle in the air, with a thousand ceremonies. He then made an opening in it, and commanded the Podestà to enter with his left foot forward. Putting a talisman into his hand, he began to mumble over some Latin, Greek and Hebrew words, calling on a hundred demons in the name of God the Eternal, alternately raising and lowering his voice, and during the frequent pauses the echo prolonged itself under the vault. Occasionally a frightened owl, blinded by the light, came flapping by the face of the Podestà, who cowered and shivered as if the cold chills of death were on him, trembling with the horrid apprehension, that the next moment the souls of the skeletons painted over the door, would burst on his vision: he fell on his knees, and prayed God in his mercy to render vain all the conjurations of his terrible companion.

While he was thus kneeling imploring for mercy, he felt a tap on his shoulder, and raising his eyes he saw an angel under the tower of the church, surrounded by a livid light, in a human form, covered with a flowing shroud, used only to wrap around the dead, slowly rising from one of the vaults. The spectre remained immovable, and we need not say how the Podestà remained. Don Michele bent over his ear and whispered:

"Bear up! courage! now is the moment to show all your fortitude! quick now, ask for all you desire." It was all of no avail. The Podestà could neither move, speak nor breathe. Don Michele then addressed several words in an unknown tongue to the spectre, who answered by slowly raising an arm and pointing towards a tomb half uncovered.

"Do you understand? The vision tells us, there we shall find florins to enrich us for life."

But the Podestà gave no sign. Seeing there was no hope of moving him, Don Michele advanced towards the sepulchre,

and easily descended. In a few seconds he came forth with an iron box, covered with dirt, and approaching the Podestà, who could not yet move a finger, poured out before him a pile of gold, or at least what seemed to be such, but their glitter as they fell, had no power to bring the breath back to the body of the poor man who had worked so hard to get them.

The last coin had hardly struck the pile where the rest had fallen, when the door burst open with a crash, and a troop of fifteen or twenty wild looking brigands, armed with pikes and halberds, rushed in upon them, and held their arms to the breasts and throats of Don Michele and his companion. The former had scarcely time to lay his hand on the hilt of his sword, before he felt four or five pikes pressing against his doublet, and some of them entering his flesh; he stood perfectly still, for he knew if he stirred he was a dead man.

The Podestà had already been so frightened, that this new peril produced on him no visible effect. He remained as they found him, with eyes distorted, his head sunk on his breast, his hands clasped together in spasmodic convulsions, till the nails of his dry bony fingers had cut through the skin, and in a suffocated voice, he murmured, "Oh kill me not, for I am in mortal sin!"*

In the confusion, the lantern which had been overturned threw its light upon this strange group, who stood still a moment, to see if their captives could, or would, defend themselves; and they seemed to be made up of that desperate class of men, who in those times were called adventurers, or soldiers of fortune. Now they are called assassins, and they were so then really, but the above mentioned title was particularly applied to bands of soldiers, who had deserted their standards, and united under a leader to commit wild depredations. Some of them were armed with breastplates or corselets, others with iron helmets, some with swords, poniards or knives, and many wore cavaliers' caps, decked with plumes and ribbons, and

* This plea for sparing his life, has even in our own times great force with the brigands of the Campagna of Rome. The writer of these pages knows a man who in this same manner escaped death, which otherwise seemed inevitable.

nearly every one bore upon his breast, or head, the image of a Madonna. Many, instead of shoes, wore sandals of goatskin, which facilitated their flights into the mountains. Of their faces we need not speak. In the light of the lantern, with their long beards, and moustaches tangled and unshorn, they looked like fiends incarnate.

One of them, throwing to the ground the halberd he held to the throat of the Podestà, stripped him and his companion of the arms they carried at their sides, and tore open their gar-

ments to see if they had others concealed.

While this tumult was going on, the spectre, disrobed of his winding-sheet, had become a man of this world, and seeing he had no time to lose had taken refuge in the belfry, and seated on the cap of a pillar, hugging the wall, waited his time to scamper; and although he could not be seen through the darkness, he could himself observe clearly everything going on in the church.

In the mean time the chief of the brigands, who was a young man about seventeen years old, but of a robust and terrific aspect, bearing a scar which extended entirely across his forehead, and raised his eyebrows more than an inch, treated the Podestà to a lusty kick in the reins, to help him to his feet, and give him the use of his tongue. A more effectual remedy could not have been applied to bring him to his senses; he raised himself without waiting for the second dose, and taken back into a corner with Don Michele, they were bound fast, and guarded by some of the troop, while the rest gathered up the gold, which they counted by the light of the lamp. This done, they put it in a leathern purse the leader carried at his belt, and the whole company left the church with their prisoners between them. With the courtesy so peculiar to that class of gentlemen, they informed them to make quicker tracks, if they were not anxious their hinder parts should cultivate a closer intimacy with the points of their poniards.

After hurrying on for about half a mile over wild ground through deserted places, where no trace of a path could be discovered, they stopped, and closely blindfolded their two captives. Fear had found a voice for the Podestà and he begged for mercy, crying like a child; this spectacle was a source of some amusement to the brigands, and they let him cry on.

But Don Michele, who now began to apprehend the worst, muttered between his teeth, "By God, it's all over," and he tried to commence a negotiation with them for his ransom; but the first word had hardly escaped his lips, before his mouth was shut by the blow of a fist, which sent two of his teeth down his throat. Finding he could neither speak nor see, he determined at least to keep his ears open. He heard them disputing about the division of the money, and the fate of their prisoners; they spoke too of the ransom, and who of the two seemed likely to be able to pay the largest sum. Among the numerous voices, and the diverse dialects (all (talian however), he distinguished one whose accent was foreign, and apparently German. But at this moment he felt several hands laid on him, and he was suddenly thrown upon the shoulders of two men, who separated from their companions, and started off in a direction, and for a destination, of which he was entirely ignorant.

The journey lasted over an honr, with stoppages at intervals, during which, the personage they bore, was not very gently deposited on the ground, to give the bearers time to rest themselves. During this journey, the terror natural to the bravest man of being slain by the brigands like a dog, the cords which bound him, and the excruciating pain of lying on the sharp points of the armor, that covered the shoulders on which he lay, began to make the joke rather a serious one to Don Michele. At last they stopped, and he heard a large door creaking on its hinges, and they entered, and closed it firm behind them. Here Don Michele was unbound, and being conducted a few paces forward, his eyes were unblinded, and he found himself in a room dimly lighted by the moon, which struggled through a ventilator. In one of the walls there was a low narrow door covered with iron bolts and locks. It was opened, and a voice said to Don Michele, "In with you." He bowed down to enter, and while he was feeling for the stairs with one of his feet before him, a blow dealt out against the hollow of his back with the heel of a pike, caused him to reach the bottom of the stair-case so much sooner than was agreeable, he would probably have had some difficulty in telling accurately the number of steps he had passed. The grating of a huge bolt on the outside advised Don Michele that, through the *door*, there was little hope of escaping.

The cell was pitch dark. He began to explore his mouth, which had now grown exceedingly painful from the blow he had received. His hands were wet when he took them out (with blood most likely), and he made up his mind ever afterwards, instead of thirty-two teeth, to calculate upon the active

service of only thirty.

"Had the devil choked thee and thy father, as was his duty, these would never have been sown on the sand," said he, thinking of the fellow who had done him the service.

But he tried to pluck up all his courage, and felt about with his hands to find out where he was. He perceived a faint light coming through an aperture from above, and he thought he heard the beating of the waves of the sea against the walls. Moving his feet round he discovered in one corner a heap of damp straw, and throwing himself down on it, he awaited the rest of his fortune.

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CHAPTER X.

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The reader has before this without doubt divined that the spectre was no other than the Capo Squadra Boscherinao. It remains for him to discover how the band of brigands happened along so timely to put an end to the well-ordered enchantments of Don Michele. It happened in the following manner:

Don Litterio kept a young and beautiful maid in his house, which had given some persons doubts about the purity of his conjugal faith. But the maiden, who troubled herself very little about the sighs of her quinquagenarian lover, was not so insensible to those of a stable-boy, who belonged to the household. The chain of their love conducted the secret of the Podestà (that he was going out that night to dig up a treasure), from mouth to mouth, till it reached the groom. He had several friends in the company of Pietraccio (for such was the name this cut-throat bore), and he managed matters so, that if the treasure was to be discovered, a part of it at least should find its way into his own pocket instead of going entire into that of his master.

Before therefore we return to Don Michele, it is necessary to inform the reader somewhat of the scene where the events we

are about to relate took place.

At the head of the bridge, which led to the little island of S. Ursula, had been erected a square massive tower, similar to the one on the bridge Samentario, which goes out from Rome towards Sabina. The entrance was closed by an immence gate with a portcullis, which could be let down when necessary, and a drawbridge. A winding stair case led up to the two stories above, where the commander and his guard were lodged, and on the top was a terrace fortified with battlements,

from which were bristling the muzzles of two pieces of artil

The abbess of the convent, invested with baronial rights, kept stationed there a guard of eighty infantry, composed of pikes and arquebuses, commanded by a German by the name of Martino Schwarzenbach, a soldier of fortune; who found it more agreeable to lounge around that old tower well paid and better fed than to fret away his life in the camp, or risk it in battle, where he had learned that the delight of maiming and stripping other people, was often disturbed by some stray ball of an arquebus, or the point of a halberd. His three predominant passions were to live far off from bustle, and to steal and afterwards to drink as much Puglia wine as his stomach could well contain, and in this respect a common-sized butt was not to be mentioned the same day.

These inclinations were strongly depicted on his face, the first two in a pair of eyes filled with avidity and cowardice, in pretty nearly equal proportions; the last, in one of the brightest sorts of vermillion, which seemed to have abandoned the rest of his face to a striking paleness, and centred in his cheeks and nose; a thin beard of the color of a goat's, purple lips, and a body that would have borne well the fatigues of war, had it not been reduced by debauchery before his fortieth year, to an enervated feebleness it should not have shown at the age of seventy.

His duty was reduced to shutting the gate at night. The armies that were carrying on the war in the vicinity had no hostile intentions against the convent; there was no need of guarding against them, and the brigands who scoured the neighborhood would never have dared to assail a strong tower guarded by eighty men, and mounted by two pieces of artillery. But Martino Schwarzenbach had still another reason for not allowing his tranquil slumbers to be disturbed, although surrounded by these bands of cut-throats. He had bound himself to the abbess to guard the *convent*, but he did not, on this account, consider himself bound to be the guardian and defender of the florins, the ducats, and the estates of the dwellers of the neighborhood, or of those who passed that way. As he

could not, however, in broad daylight, betake himself to fishing in other men's ponds, he had (to use a modern phrase) taken an interest in the capital employed by Pietraccio. He gave him a stout lift with his men when necessity demanded, and he hid money, property, and even persons, when he thought there was any prospect of a large reward. All these operations were so cautiously conducted, however, that his victims laid the blame upon everybody rather than Martino, whose only bad quality was the reputation of being the greatest guzzler in the whole country.

Into his hands had fallen Don Michele; who had passed the night in restless fancies, without the faintest idea where he was. At daybreak, he heard the three reports of artillery, which sounded every morning from the castle of Barletta. He rose, and climbed as well as he could to the small aperture where the light entered, but the outside was so deeply shaded by ivy, he caught only a faint glimpse of the sea. He remained looking out for a moment, and saw a boat pass by laden with fruit; he recognized in the oarsman the gardener of S. Ursula.

He was now almost certain he was in the bottom of the tower which defended the convent.

He had hardly descended from the place of his discovery, when his prison opened, and he was conducted up the steps by two stout soldiers into the room of the Captain. The latter had just risen, and was sitting half dressed on the side of his bed, with a table before him, covered with the confused remains of his last night's debauch. The large beams which extended round the walls, were covered with pikes and bayoneted arquebuses, breast-plates and armor of every description. He looked at Don Michele as he entered, with an eye which seemed to find no little difficulty in raising the red drooping

lid which covered it, and drumming away on the floor with one of his slippers he said to the new comer:

"Thou shouldst know, Monsieur what's thy name, that he who passes a night at my inn pays one hundred gold florins of ten livres each, of the Florentine mint, or if he likes better that of S. Marco; otherwise one end of a cord round his neck, with a stone tied to the other, and a bath in the sea, save

him the trouble of paying the bill. Which wouldst thou like best?"

"That which will be best for me will not be the best for thee," answered Don Michele boldly. "Last night thou took'st us two, but we were not alone in the church. There was one man thou didst not see, but he saw thee and he knows thee, and at this hour in Barletta thy villainy is all known; and as for that bath in the sea it will soon be thy turn to try and not mine, unless thou canst find out some way to keep three or four hundred Catalonians and Romans from battering down the gate of this tower to their feet, or get them to hang thee from thy own battlements instead of sending thee to scrape acquaintance with the water, which, if I can judge from what I see, thou wouldst taste for the first time."

This idea was suggested to him by the sight of a half barrel the German kept at the head of his bed, in lieu of saints and crucifixes.

This bold reply stirred the blood of the Conestabile, who pulled his cap down over his forehead and said:

"If thou thinkest thou art dealing with a child and canst intimidate me by thy brags, I give thee timely notice that I don't believe what thou sayest, and if thy Albanians or any devil thou hast named did come, I have the means of not being afraid of them, or the sea, or the battlements, and I hardly know what keeps me from drawing the hemp on thee this minute. But I love better after all the jingle of thy florins than the cawing of the ravens who would come to pick out thy eyes. Therefore to business. Here are the implements for writing—scribble something that will bring the money, and when it comes take thyself away with thy bad manners where thou likest best."

Without showing any hurry about an answer, Don Michele looked at him with the smile of a man who has no fear, but deciding within himself whether he shall take it all in earnest or as a joke. The Captain's ire was just ready to burst forth with more effectual weapons than words, but the answer withheld it.

"Conestabile, florins please thee, thou art no enemy to wine,

and on the whole I take thee to be a devilish good sort of a fellow. In fact a good soldier ought to be so—thief, tapster, and not overstocked with devotion. Now what the devil makes thee so uncivil? Hark ye! I'm determined we shall be good friends after all. True, thou hast forced me to lodge at thy inn, and makest me pay pretty dear for the lodging, and were it not * * but no matter, I excuse thee, and will make this a luckier hit than thou hadst any reason to expect."

Here he turned round, and casting a withering glance on the two fellows who had brought him up from the dungeon, and still held him by the arms:

"Tell me, boys, have you nothing better to do than to stand here at my ribs as the two thieves did at the side of our Lord? Go, my sweet fellow," he said, wresting his arm from one and giving him a slap on the face, and liberating himself from the other in the same way, "Go, go, thou too, no need of thy help. I can stand alone. Go and keep an eye out on the road to Barletta and see if anybody is coming. I've a couple of words to say to his lordship. You see I'm unarmed, and I don't intend to make a breakfast of your master, for the devil's stomach couldn't digest him."

The soldiers, no less than Martino, were struck dumb by this sangfroid, and they looked their master in the face to see what he thought about it. He gave them a nod, and they left the room. But, finding himself alone, he thought it prudent to get on his feet and keep his guest at a good sword's length distance.

"Conestabile! thou hast demanded a hundred florins for my ransom. I did not think I was worth so little; and to teach thee how to prize men of my stamp better in future, I'll give thee two hundred. (The German opened his eyes, and his mouth watered.) Yes, two hundred; but then, this would all be nothing. If thou could'st but serve me with zeal and good faith, I would like to bring thee to a fortune that would open thy eyes. Eh! but it's useless—thou should'st be wideawake, know when to speak and when to hold thy tongue; in a word, not to wear that parsnip-face and a set of eyes that look like baby-pap floating in oil."

Martino beholding such self-assurance thought he was dreaming, and a thousand ideas rushed into his brain of having perhaps some prince or grand personage before him in disguise. But unable to satisfy himself about anything, and not a little galled to find himself so little respected in his own stronghold, he replied:—

"But in the name of God or the Devil, who begot you-who are you?-what do you want? I'm sick of this stuff, and I'm

a jest for no man-"

"Not so fast—not so fast, and with good grace; for, if I get riled I say not another word, and then worse for you. Know, then, * * *"

Here a soldier entered and interrupted Don Michele, saying:

"Conestabile! a cloud of dust is rising off over the road to Barletta, like cavalry coming; at least, so says Sandro, who sees more than all of us." The German started, and eyed his

prisoner, who laughed maliciously as he went on-

"I told you so before! But don't fear; judgment, and all will end well. Go," he said to the servant, "and if there's any news let us know. Well, as I was saying, know that there is in this convent a person (kept by those I need not name), who would gladly escape and go free in the world without being eternally surrounded by hoods and crosses. This calls for light fingers. If some night a boat happens to come along under the walls, with five or six stout young fellows to take her off-and the Conestabile hears a dog bark, or some delicate voice cry mercy, -(Ah! but you know too well the women always scream two hours before you touch them)-don't be disturbed, think it was only a dream, and turn over on the other side and snore away, and this little service will bring you, as though they came from Heaven, five hundred new sequins of Saint Mark; or, if you like better those of the lily-and perhaps, afterwards, a better station than you have here in this tucked-up barrack."

Poor Martino, who, with all his vices, had the good quality of being faithful to his employer, was so elated by this tempting bribe that he found himself on the very brink of losing his fidelity. But the law which has decided there shall be nothing in this world absolutely good nor absolutely bad, saved him from total shipwreck; and he replied with an intention of showing himself offended, but his words, after all, smacked rather of surprise than indignation.

"Martin Schwarzenbach has served Milan, Venice, and the Emperor in his time, and he never betrayed his master. The Abbess of S. Ursula has paid him, in advance, up to all December, 1503. If your lordship is some * * * I know not what * * some Signore * * or some agent of an Italian Prince, and wish to employ me, very well, we will talk about it. I'll show you my company—they are 50 pikes, and 30 arquebuses. All from twenty to forty years old; and, as for their armor, there's not the tongue of a buckle missing. If we can settle the preliminaries on the 1st of January, 1504, we'll come, if you like, and make an assault on the convent—and we'll take them all off, even to the cook in the kitchen. But before that time, while I have a charge of powder left, and a blade to my hand, no man shall touch a hair on the head of a nun or a novice."

" And do you think, Sig. Martino, I don't know the duty of a man in your station? Think you I'd have the face to propose to you a deed of villainy? You don't know me. The person in question is neither nun nor novice, and has no more to do with the convent than that half-barrel you keep at the head of your bed there! Why, God bless you, and easy it is to see you are an honest man, and know that when one can go at his convenience, he is a fool to go on the run; and when he can sleep under cover with half a glass of good Greek, he's a madman who sleeps out of doors with a cold stomach. When he can make 500 florins without taking any pains, honorably in the world's eyes, and virtuously in the sight of God, he ought to bethink himself that such luck falls not into the mouth every day, like flower-figs. Now, if you say, we'll consider ourselves understood, and you must determine quick, for that troop of cavalry can't be far off."

The virtue of Martino, like that of the great majority of mankind, was capable of transition, and he replied:—"Oh! well, when the nuns are left out of the question, it becomes quite another affair."

Don Michele stood thinking whether he should then reveal

to Martino the name of the female he wished to carry off, and for some time made no reply. A noisy quarrel between two soldiers at the door put a sudden stop to their conversation.

"May the devil strangle thee, cursed hunchback—there's one there who ought to be; and the Conestabile has other fish to

fry than to hear thy bawling."

Thus cried out one of the soldiers as he tried to stop a little hunchbacked woman, whose eyes were the color of mother-of-pearl, fringed with scarlet, from entering the captain's room. She had more than half entered, but the soldier held her tight by the throat, straining the skin till her mouth was distorted at least three fingers from its proper position. The old woman gave one scratch with her nails, sharper than steel, across the hand that held her, which soon effected her liberation, and fell exhausted at the feet of Don Michele, to whom she clung, and shook one fist at the soldiers behind her, telling them not to touch her, poor creature.

"Take that, thou son of a cannon," she said, turning to the soldier who was wiping off the blood from his scratches, and looking at the old woman very much as a mastiff looks at the cat that made him feel her claw. "Yes, take that, and if thou want'st to try it again, thou wilt catch something worse

yet."

"And thou, ugly witch, try once more to enter here, when I am on guard * * Sandro, my good fellow, God bless thee (and as he spake these words he drew his under lip back of his upper teeth to imitate the voice of the old woman), let me go into the convent just a moment to say a word to that stranger lady, to get a little linen for Scannaprete, who is wounded, and a powder for Paciocco, who has a fever, * * a small bit of cancer (resuming his natural voice) light on thee, and the devil who sends thee! Just come back here once, and I'll give thee a taste of something. May they tear out my tongue by the roots, as Valenza, God bless him for it, did to the villain thy master, if I don't make thee chant a funeral hymn, thou hag of the night of Saint Giovanni."

The old woman could easily have found matter to make up an answer, and not have infringed one of the fundamental laws of the female code, that of always having the last word, but she was in a hurry to say something important, and turning her back to Sandro, in a way which may be more easily imagined, than described,

"If you don't interfere (she addressed the Conestabile), this will be a fine business—up there on the plain, there's been infernal work last night. The men came back an hour before daylight bringing that ugly Christian you took yesterday evening * * Holy virgin! he looked as though he had been dead three days. But his fright did not last long. Pietraccio dispatched him as he would have done a suckling kid."

"How?" exclaimed Martino and Don Michele, both speaking at once. "Have they killed the Podestà? Why? Where? How?"

"What do you want me to say? Blessed Virgin! Pietraccio tried to make him understand he must pay God knows how many ducats for his ransom. And without a tongue you know it's hard for a man to explain himself. He stood with his eyes fixed and glazed more than half mad. Then my master wrote what he wished on a sheet of paper, and handed it to him to read. Worse still! He looked like the statue of Saint Rocco, in the chapel of Belfiore. Pietraccio then gave him three or four slaps on the face, but I need not say what sort they were. No change! And then his rage come up * * * * you know when he gets angry!! * * * * * * The knife in his raised hand went in here at the pit of the stomach, and through it went (but then the knife is a foolish plaything—better leave it alone—it's shameful for old men). In fact what do you want? He's a boy—I've said so a thousand times to his mother! Ghita! that lad is too skilful with his hands * * but there's no such thing as keeping him cool * *" This intelligence, and the way it was told, so astonished the two listeners, although for very different reasons, that they found no words for an answer.

The old woman went on. "In a word I finish, and then take myself off, for I've been on my feet all night. We went to sleep for an hour. In came Cocco d'Oro running. Up! Up! quick! the sheriff—the court * * Up we got * what then—they were already under Malagroita, and were coming on post

haste. We set our legs to carrying us up the mountain. Now they are all concealed in the Grotto of Focognano, without a crust of bread, or a drop of water, and on the plain there are at least 200, between police and soldiers, and God send that they don't get the tribe before the fêtes. Now stir yourself quick, and find out some way to remedy the matter. * * Before this they have found the Podestà dispatched * * Holy Virgin * * what will be the end of this * * And says Ghita, don't forget that up there there isn't a bone to gnaw, and don't lose time in sending something."

When she had finished her story, she seized up the remnants of the last night's supper she saw lying on the table, and without licence filled her apron with pieces of bread and meat, and fruit,—turned into a flask she carried, hung at her shoulder the wine that remained, drinking what the flask could not hold, and wiping her mouth with the back of her hand she left the room, giving Sandro a push as she passed to clear the way, without making a parting sign to Martino or Don Michele.

Ideas were thickening round the brain of Martino too fast to leave his head free from confusion, and with one hand on his beard and the other behind him he walked the room, shaking his head and breathing in a hurried manner. The sudden movement of the cavalry of Barletta inclined him to give credence to the statement of Don Michele, who had forewarned him of it so exactly, and he began to think him really the great man he pretended to be.

First of all he determined to adjust matters with him that he might not betray him to those who were coming from Barletta, in search of the assassins of the Podestà. Laying aside all haughtiness and half supplicating him, he made a tender of his utmost efforts in any undertaking. Their negotiations were hardly finished when the body of cavalry drove on to the bridge, and a clear voice louder than a trumpet called several times, Conestabile! Schwarzenbach! The Captain descended, and found Ettore Fieramosca and Fanfulla da Lodi waiting for him at the head of a large body of cavalry. The reader may perhaps remember the name of the second as one of the Italians

chosen for the approaching combat, and throughout the entire soldiery of Italy there was not a more desperately courageous man than he. For the most trivial reason, and often without any reason at all, he had frequently placed his life in danger Without reflection he thought only of his pleasures, and the necessity for fighting. Spry as a leopard, all nerve, an elastic and well knit frame, it seemed that nature, aware it would be the dwelling of a soul rash to madness, had studied to form him expressly to resist the most dangerous trials. He was the son of a soldier of Girolamo Rirario, and had been bred up in the camp. He had served in all the States of Italy, for either on account of a quarrel or insubordination or desire of change he was constantly seeking new masters. He had last fought under the Florentine standards, and abandoned their service under the following circumstances.

Encamped under the walls of Pisa, an assault was made,

in which, had not Paolo Viletti, Captain of the Republic, sounded a retreat and called off his men, the Florentine soldiers, filled with ardor, would have followed up their first advantage and taken possession of Pisa on that very day (Viletti, as every one knows, was branded as a traitor by his countrymen, and put to death). Fanfulla, always at the head of the foremost, mounted one of the battlements by a scaling ladder, and pulling himself up by his arms, was soon on the top, where his desperate and invincible strokes with his broadsword opened a passage for a band of men to follow him. At this moment the retreat was sounded, and he was left fighting alone. All his indignation was roused when he saw he must retreat. He descended foaming with rage, under a shower of javelins, stones, and bullets, which glanced harmlessly from him; and safe and sound he rushed back to the camp cursing like a madman everybody he met. The commissaries of the Florentine army were in council with Viletti in his camp. The infuriated Fanfulla rushed into their midst, and calling them traitors, fell upon them with a club he had picked up on the way, and began to deal out indiscriminate blows, and kicks, and thrusts, and

stabs, reckless who, or how, or where he struck. He wielded the power of a giant, and the company, who were looking for

no such tempest, were sent reeling to the ground, one over another, before they had fairly discovered the author of the disturbance.

After such an exploit, as may be easily imagined, he mounted a horse without wasting any time in adieus, turned his back, and before the leaders of the retreating army had fairly taken an observation on their feet, he was far away from the camp. He took his course for the south, where he enlisted under the banner of Prospero Colonna, and was now with the rest of his

company at Barletta.

The news brought by Boscherino, that the Podestà had been taken by a band of brigands, communicated, of course, in a manner which brought no suspicion upon himself, had set in motion the whole police force of Barletta, who had begun their search among the mountains. Fieramosca and Fanfulla had followed on with a troop of horse, and while the police were pressing up the pursuit, had stopped to guard the pass into the valley where the old church stood, receiving from the hands of the policemen, two prisoners taken with no little difficulty, whom they had conducted to the tower Martino Schwarzenbach commanded.

When the captain descended to the gate, the two robbers were standing in the midst of the soldiers waiting for the prisor to be opened. One of them was the chief of the band, Pietraccio, a ferocious young fellow, who had the face and the frame of a savage. He wore a rude cap from which his hair fell over his eyes in long red folds; his arms were bare, still covered with the Podestà's blood; and bound with a cord so tightly across the breast that it cut into his flesh, and he had the cowardly sullen look of a wolf caught in a trap. The other was a woman of tall stature and beautiful form, but toil, habits of crime, the desperation of her present condition, gave her a haggard appearance, which indicated a greater age than she really bore. A wound that fell on her head while she was defending herself, had so deprived her of strength she had been borne in the arms of two soldiers. They had laid her down on the pavement with a shock which renewed the pain of the wound, and made her open her eyes and heave a deep sigh,

while the blood rushed out afresh from her forehead and poured down over her face and breast. The dungeon where Don Michele had been confined, was opened, and she was cast in with Pietraccio, both of them still bound as they were.

Freed from their charge, the troops returned towards the valley to be ready to receive other captives. Fanfulla mounted to the room of the Conestabile, and Ettore improved the

opportunity of making a visit to Ginevra.

The two females were surprised at his unexpected appearance at that hour, and after the first cordial greetings, listened to the cause which had brought him to the convent. In relating the search for the brigands, he told them that, with the leader, a woman had been captured, who, placing herself at the entrance of the cave where they were hid, had fought desperately, wounding several of the policemen, till she had been brought to the ground by a blow on the head.

Ginevra's compassion was excited, and she determined to go to her succor. She went to a casket where she kept different powders and preparations for which she was sometimes applied to, as we have seen, by the assassins themselves, and taking out something she thought would be serviceable, she requested Fieramosca to go to the Conestabile for the key of

the dungeon.

He went out, and passing up the winding stair-case which conducted to Martino's apartment, he heard, as he approached the entrance, a rapid shuffling of feet which he could not explain. He burst open the door and saw Fanfulla standing in the centre of the room with an immense two-handled sword he had taken down from the beam, which he was brandishing about like a madman. He made feints, quick passes, thrusts, and cleaving blows, with such velocity, that the blade could hardly be seen but by misty circles in the air, and he wielded it as though he had been defending himself against an enemy. Ettore, who was entering, drew back a moment for fear of catching a stray cut, and contemplated with a smile the harebrained play, Fanfulla flattered himself, was performed unobserved. The strokes he dealt in the air seemed, to the misfortune of the proprietor of the room, to have occasionally taken

effect. By mistake or malice, one of the blows had put an end to the long services of the half barrel, for it now lay under the bed divided in the middle like a nut cracked in two, and the liquor it contained had found its level in the lower parts of the floor.

"Holy wine is tapped late this year," at last exclaimed Fieramosca with a laugh, and Fanfulla wheeling round let the broadsword fall at his feet, and turned a summerset upon the bed-clothes, bursting into a loud laugh like a lunatic.

"What the devil hast thou done, madman? Take care, take care! We've hardly been here half an hour, and thou hast done more mischief than a third of the Catalonians in a week; and Martino, where is he?"

At last Fanfulla cooled down, replied:

"He was here a minute ago, and had the impudence to say that nobody but the Swiss and the Germans knew how to wield a two handled broadsword. True, says I, and I besought him to show me a bit; trying my hand at it as well as I could, I made an attack on the barrel (and may I be quartered if I did it on purpose), and he flew into a rage as though I'd fallen on him. Why just think what a beast! He can't take a joke! and besides he was one of these chaps who knew that we Italians can hold a blade in hand. Well, to make a short story we had some high words, and he went off cursing and full of his threats. What would you have done? Not caring to banter words with the blockhead, I sent him a cancher after the Lombard fashion, and told him, 'If you'd like to go down on the green before the tower, I'll made an attack on your Dutch gourd, to show I mistook my man when I fell on the barrel."

" And what did he say?"

"Why, that I had better take myself off."

When he had finished his story, he leaped on the bed roaring with laughter, and sent its contents hurling into the air. The facts really were as he had related them; and the captain, not caring to pick a quarrel with such a wild devil, and enraged by the loss of his wine, had gone off swearing in German, and climbed up by a stairway to a room in the next

story, where he had concealed Don Michele. From his stronghold he overheard the story of Fanfulla, and occasionally raised his voice to twit him of his villainy, to which he replied giving him by way of parenthesis as good as he sent, still continuing his narrative.

Fieramosca, who had little heart for such jokes, became arbitrator, and with some difficulty brought them again to cordial terms. Martino came down, Fanfulla went off laughing, and Ettore, who could hardly keep himself from laughing also, when he saw the German contemplate his divided barrel with the eye of a miser, who finds his secret case open and empty, made known the desire of Ginevra to enter the dungeon, and courteously requested it might be granted.

The Conestabile had in the meantime set up on end the two pieces of the barrel, and with a wrapping-cloth he began to soak up the wine, and wring it carefully into the recipients, by which process he recovered a portion of his wasted treasure. When he heard the desire of Ginevra he roughly

replied:

"Listen! The assassins find those who succor them; and a poor man who minds his own business, and does no harm to a living soul, finds madmen ready to sack his house!"

- "Signor Martino, you are a thousand times right, but you see I have had no hand in this."
- "And pray what hand had I in inviting the devil to come and play off his pranks in my house?"

Fieramosca still insisted.

"Well, well, come back in half an hour, and you shall go into the dungeon—and may you all die there," he muttered between his teeth. But Fieramosca was already half down the stairs, and his words did not reach his ear.

CHAPTER XI.

The capture of Pietraccio and his mother was an event which seemed likely to be attended with grave consequences to Martino, and disturb the plans of Don Michele. They had already talked the matter over, and came to the conclusion it was necessary to let the assassin escape, that he might not be taken to Barletta, where he might reveal the practices of the captain. But this was not to be easily done without bribing over his keeper.

When Fieramosca came to obtain admission to the dungeon, disturbed as he was by the pranks of Fanfulla, he could not at the moment decide what effect this was likely to have upon his own prospects. He had, however, sufficient tact to improve his time; and, confiding in the artfulness of his new friend, he mounted again to his room, hoping to discover some means of extricating himself from his embarrassment. When Don Michele had heard the demand of Fieramosca, he said:

"If we had taken him in our pay he would not have served us better. Leave matters to me, Conestabile, and you'll see if I can do a neat job; but remember—" * *

"Yes, we understand each other. It's all cut and dried

* * However, * * the nuns," * *

"The nuns," answered Don Michele, laughing, "we won't touch the creatures. Keep easy about that. Now hand me the keys of the dungeon, and wait for me here."

Taking the keys he descended to the ground-floor, and carefully opened the door. Putting his ear down, he heard the young chief and his mother conversing. He stopped, and stood still on the first stair of the four or five which led down to the dungeon, and stretched out his neck till he could see and hear them both.

The mother had been laid on the ground, with her head resting on a beam, in a corner of the dungeon, but being seized with a burning fever, in her writhing she had fallen with her forehead on the damp, cold earth, without strength to raise herself up. The son, with his arms bound so tightly across his breast he could not stir even a finger, had made a generous but ineffectual attempt to help her: he had at last knelt down in despair by her side, with his vacant eye turned, hopelessly, now on his mother, and now on the wall. She was rallying her last strength, at each moment, to raise her head, but she was too weak to do it alone. At last, by a desperate struggle, the son had succeeded in getting his knee under her head, as she put forth all her energy, and in this manner she had succeeded in regaining her first position. But the effort was followed by so violent a paroxysm of pain, she had raised her hands to her head, and, with a prolonged groan, exclaimed:

"Curse the blow of that villain's Calabrian pike. * * But if the devil leave me two minutes, * * * I'll have thee know for once who thou art. * * What good in praying to God and his saints? They listened to me finely when I prayed them!" * * * And here raising with difficulty her glazed eyes towards the ceiling, she shrieked forth blasphemies that would have made any man's hair but Pietraccio's stand on end. "And yet," she continued, changing her desperately ferocious tone to one more dolorous and deep, "and yet even I had hoped for pardon * * when I used to chant with the other nuns. * * Oh! cursed be the hour I ever put my feet over that threshold! * * But what's the use of mourning. * I belonged to the devil before I was born, * * I've tried to escape from him, * * see how I've succeeded." And lifting her eyes once more to heaven, she said with an expression that could not be described, "Art thou content?" Then turning to her son: "But if thou canst escape from this place * * if thou art a man, * * he who is the cause of my death and thy ruin, will be my eternal companion, if the priests tell the truth. That night at Rome, when I placed thee at the corner of the Bloody-Tower to assassinate that lord, and thou, dolt,

didst cry out before the deed was done, and they took thee and ruined thee as thou art. * * He was Cæsar Borgia!...

While he was in the university of Pisa, I was in a convent, and he became enamored of me, and I, mad fool, of him. Did I know who he was? One night he came to me, * * I had with me a little daughter seven years old, * * * she was sleeping in a little room near by, and she awoke—she saw him entering the window, and she gave a scream, * * wo to him, if they had discovered him, * * he had just been made Bishop of Pamplona—he threw the pillows over her head and held them down with his knees! Monster! * * I fell to the ground. * * Oh! swear to me by all hell! by my death! thou wilt kill him! * * Tell me by a nod thou takest the oath, * * at least this!" *

The assassin, with his eyes strained horribly on his mother, moved his head in sign of his oath, and she, taking from under her clothes a chain she wore next her body, went on:—

"And when thou hast torn out his heart, tell him. * *
Look at this chain, * * look at it close—my mother returns
it to thee. * * I have not done yet. * * Oh! for one
moment longer! then I shall not fear thee—when I came to
myself, I was extended on the bed—and thou wert * * Oh!
God, I can't utter the word, * * in the place of poor Ines.
Oh! how beautiful thou wert, my darling! * * * now thou
art in Paradise, * * and I! I!!? Why must I go to hell?"
And as she gasped forth these broken words, she uttered a
scream which shook the very ceiling of the dungeon—she was
dead'

Pietraccio was not greatly moved. With a vacant look he gazed on the convulsions of death on his mother, and when he saw she had expired, he crawled away into a distant corner, and crouched down shivering like a wild beast shut up in a cage, with a dead body of one of its own species.

This terrible story, uttered in the raving delirium of the dying, he had heard only in part. The single vivid idea that sunk into his brain was, that he had sworn to revenge her wrongs on Cæsar Borgia, for a thousand reasons! But princi-

pally, it seemed to him, for bringing him to this woful condition.

But this same relation had very differently struck the villainagent of Valentino; and had a human being gazed on him at that moment, he would have felt that every word of the dying woman had sucked out his very life-blood, drop by drop, so terribly was his countenance changed; and when the mother fell a corpse upon the floor, he almost fell himself. He descended with trembling legs, and with trembling hand cut the cords that bound Pietraccio; and fixing his eye for a moment on the chain around his neck, said to him—

"In a moment a gentleman and lady are coming to visit thee. They wish to liberate thee, but, it seems to me, this should not be their work. Watch thy time, and while they are seeing if they can help the woman, take to the stairs and fly; and look out thou art not taken again, for a price is already on thy head!"

He uttered these words with a tremor, as if he were standing on coals of fire—left his own poniard in the hands of Pietraccio, and in almost a single breath was again in the room of the Conestabile. In the proper place we shall assign the reasons why what he had seen and heard in that dungeon had power to make even such a desperate villain tremble.

Our reader will perhaps begin to say, "When will we have done with this frightful train of assassins, traitors, prisoners, deaths, devils, and what not?"

But if we have divined his secret, he (begging his pardon) has not discovered ours: for it is our intention, at this very moment, to put an end to the *imbroglio*, by sending Don Michele, Pietraccio and Martino, all to the devil; for, to tell the truth, we have about got sick of them ourselves. We must ask the reader once more to take a leap into the very midst of the castle of Barletta, which we shall find has undergone no little change from the period of our first visit with Don Michele.

The courtyard and terraces were ornamented with hangings of silk of every color—with garlands of myrtle and laurel, wrought into festoons and cyphers—and from the balconies and the windows were waving, in gorgeous folds, all the ban-

ners of the army. The multitude, crowded around, made up of idlers, spectators, and men employed in making preparations, were moving about, closing in, and again dispersing through the stairways, the courtyard and the galleries. Servants and laborers, soldiers and pages, were going and coming with loads of cords, ladders, and implements of every description, for furnishing the table or adorning the theatre—meats, fruits, wines and wild-game, which the chief men of the city and the army were rivalling each other in presenting to the Spanish captain—there was nothing but going and coming, screaming and calling; and, in a word, everything was in inconceivable confusion.

When the bell of the tower struck the fourteenth hour (eight o'clock in the morning), the great captain appeared at the head of the outside staircase, with all his barons; and the joy he felt in the prospect of so soon greeting his beloved daughter (for the courier had arrived with intelligence she was only three miles from Barletta), he had shown in the magnificence of his dress, and that of his cortége.

Over a close doublet of superb cloth of gold, he wore a mantle of bright purple velvet, lined with ermine, and on his head a cap of the same material. From a most beautiful clasp of sapphire shot up a plume, more than a palm in height, composed entirely of the purest pearls, strung on threads of steel; but it floated over his brow as light and airy as though it had been made of down. His sword and dagger, sheathed also in purple velvet, glittered in gems; on his left breast was a sword embroidered in crimson, the insignia of the order of St. James.

A white Catalonian mule was there waiting for him, at the bottom of the steps, caparisoned in a saddle-cloth of changeable purple silk, quilted in gold, that swept the ground. Seated in his saddle, his suite mounted their horses, and the whole cortége set off to meet the Donna Elvira. Prospero and Fabrizio Colonna, dressed in rose *sciamito*, richly embroidered in silver, rode by his side, on the two most beautiful Arab horses that had for a long time been seen in Italy. The two brothers, not yet past the vigor of manhood, sat in their high velvet saddles, curbing in their prancing steeds with a superb air, which well

became the two bravest soldiers and illustrious Condottieri of Italy.

In the train that followed, all eyes were turned on the frowning, robust Pedro Navarro, the inventor of the mines used with such dreadful effect at the siege of Castel dell' Uovo. Diego Garcia di Paredes, the Hercules of the times, who never clothed himself but in steel, without even preparing a court-dress for this gala-day, had limited his display to a brighter burnishing of his arms than usual, and mounting the most ferocious battle charger that stood in his stalls. He now appeared on a wild Calabrian stallion, caught but a few weeks before, high, strong-limbed, and black as a raven, without a hair of another color. Paredes was the only man who would or could ride this wild animal. His home was in the forest, and finding himself in the midst of the gay thousands, he lashed himself into rage, and foamed like a lion.

But the stature of the knight, his heavy armor, and the aid of a bit half an arm's length, which drew blood from the charger's mouth, kept him in subjection; and after making a hundred wild leaps (and every one was careful to give him room), he wisely concluded he had found a master in Diego Garcia, who, nailed between the saddle-bows, laughed at his vain struggles.

The flower of the Italian youth came on with the Spanish barons. Ettore Fieramosca rode between his two dearest friends, Inigo Lopes de Ayala and Brancaleone, carrying a mantle of blue satin, embroidered in silver, the work and the gift of the two females of S. Ursula. He had the reputation of being the best horseman in the army. The horse on which he rode, of the color of pearl, with dark main and tail, given him by Signore Prospero, had been trained by him with so much care, he seemed to know the will of his master without the aid of spur or bridle. Fieramosca seemed to possess the gift of being the first in all things, whoever was his rival. His form, matchless in every proportion, was shown in all its perfection by a dress of white satin, fitted so closely to his body that not a wrinkle could be seen from head to foot; and such was his beauty and the grace of his carriage, that the multitude, who

crowded around the cavalcade as it moved on, bent upon him all their looks, and accorded to him all their admiration. The youth saw his triumph, and half blushed at the consciousness of a sentiment in himself, he could hardly have pardoned in the other sex.

The cortége was brought up by the squires and attendants of the knights who preceded them; and as it was the custom in those times for every knight to attach to his service men of different nations, and the more barbarous and foreign, the more they were prized, there were to be seen Spahis Turks with corselets in the forms of shells, with scimitars and crescents—men from the kingdom of Granada, armed with Moorish lances, and two Tartar bowmen, who were the grooms of Prospero Colonna, dressed in the most flashing colors, with their bows and quivers of massive silver. There were negroes from the sources of the Nile, armed with long darts, and their barbarous visages contrasting with the pure complexions of the Europeans, formed tout ensemble a picture of the truest but most bizarre description.

The departure of Gonzales was announced by the thunder of all the artillery which bristled from the towers and battlements of the castle, and the chiming of the bells of the city. At intervals could be heard above the deafening noise, the blasts of the trumpets, and the music of instruments producing a harmony, which, if filled with discords, served to express the martial joy which inspired the army.

The news was now brought to the great Captain that the Duke of Nemours with all his barons had already entered Barletta. He stopped the cortége, and sending some of his cavaliers to meet him, in a few minutes the French appeared on the opposite side of the piazza. When the Duke saw Gonzales dismounted, coming to meet him, he was soon on the ground himself, and both of them extending their hands with cordiality, the Frenchman courteously said he should consider himself wanting in chivalry, if when he had been invited to a festa he should come to disturb it, as would have been the case if on his own account he had retarded the father for a single moment from embracing his child.

Aware he was then on his way to meet her, he prayed him to allow him to accompany them, assured that although war made them enemies, the Spanish Captain would accord to him the merit of being the most enthusiastic admirer of his valor, his genius and all his sublime gifts. Such courteous words insured a cordial acquiescence.

The two chieftains again mounted to their saddles and led the cortége on their trains, mingling together with all that courtesy of manner of which the French have in all ages been such perfect masters. A little more than a mile from the gates of the city the cortége halted, for the train which escorted the litter of Donna Élvira had appeared in the distance.

She came in the company of Vittoria Colonna, daughter of Fabrizio, who afterwards became the bride of the Marquis de Pescara, held dear by all the world for her fortitude, her virtue and her genius. Gonzales dismounted, and ran to embrace his daughter who had descended from the litter, and he folded her in his arms repeatedly, exclaiming, "Hija de mi alma" (child of my soul), and he loaded her with caresses which contrasted strikingly with the lofty dignity of that great man.

He had chosen Ettore and Inigo to act as Esquires to his daughter, and they came forward with an Andalusian jenet for her to mount. The young Italian dropped one knee to the ground, and the Donzella stepping lightly the end of her foot on the other, mounted to the saddle with the most perfect grace. The pale brow of Fieramosca tinged with a slight vermillion when he rose to his feet, and received the thanks of Donna Elvira, accompanied by a smile and a glance of the eye, which expressed but too well the satisfaction she felt in a choice which had accorded her so handsome a knight. Her character (and this may have been caused by the excessive caresses of her father) was not marked perhaps by all that maturity, which might be expected in a maiden of twenty vears. Her warm heart and vivid fancy were not always tempered by that upright judgment so difficult to find in either sex, and which is, notwithstanding, after virtue, the most precious jewel of the soul.

Her friend, Vittoria Colonna, united to these two gifts, shrewd-

ness, and the brilliancy of a ready genius. Although they might have been called equally beautiful, there could not have been found two beauties in character more dissimilar. The flashing eyes of Donna Elvira, her frequent smile, caused in part perhaps by an intimate consciousness it brightened her beauty, pleased at first sight; but the majestic and truly Roman features and fame of the daughter of Fabrizio, her beautiful countenance, like the ideal the Grecian sculptors tried to embody in the Muses, a kind of divine ray that flashed around her eyes, went deeper to the heart, and stirred up a feeling not easily forgotten. A penetrating eye would have fancied in her a tinge of pride. If it were there, her virtue overcame it, and made it brighten the sublimity of her character.

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CHAPTER XII.

THE whole cortége entered Barletta, and dismounted at the castle. The best apartments were assigned to the new guests, the train dispersed, and each one prepared to participate in the chases and tournaments that were to take place during the day. Lists had been erected on the piazza with rising platforms, and a circle of boxes gaily ornamented. In certain enclosures appropriated to that purpose, there had been seen for several days previous, bulls, steers and buffaloes, all wild; destined for the arena, so passionately admired by the Italians of those times, that the noblest gentleman did not disdain to mingle in its dangers and excitements. In this place, which had been levelled and prepared for that purpose, the combat was to take place, and already was the enclosure crowded with people. The roofs and windows of the neighboring houses were also thronged with spectators; and the sergeants and esquires, in their many-colored doublets, were now awaiting, in the newly swept and freshly watered piazza, the arrival of Gonzales.

He came up soon after with all his train—the Duke de Nemours on his right, and on his left Donna Elvira. Riding round the lists they alighted at the most spacious and magnificent box, and took their seats amidst the cheers and acclamations of the populace—who are always so captivated with gorgeous dress, and gold, and tinsel—and the signal was given for turning out the first bull. The murmur of the multitude, and the strife of spectators for the best places, stopped suddenly when the enclosure was opened. An immense bull, with head and hinder parts all black, and a ring of dark russet girdling his body, leaped into the arena. Throwing up his

tail, he rushed about for some time, till he saw he had not yet escaped from his prison, and stopping short rolled his bloody eyes suspiciously around, and began to paw up the dirt in the arena.

At this moment all eyes were attracted towards an angle of the piazza, by an affray between two men, the cause of which was unknown. To explain it to the reader, we must return for

a single moment to the females of Saint Ursula.

The evening Fieramosca had announced to them that the combat against the French was decided on, Ginevra was not the only one who trembled at the thought of the danger he was to run. Zoraide herself was also overcome with fear. The heart which beats in a proud and lofty bosom is often difficult of access; but if, at last, love enter there, how great the ruin. From that night she knew neither peace, nor repose, nor slumber. She passed her days wrapt in one single thought, harassed without ceasing by the same fancies she could not drive away, unable even to apply herself to her usual occupations, except for a few moments, when she seated herself at the embroidery frame to work on the mantle destined for Ettore. But she soon threw down her needle and passed whole hours at the balcony, unconscious what she was doing, pulling off the twigs and vine leaves that shaded the place; or she hastily left the room, as though she had something important to do, and then, forgetting herself entirely, slackened her pace and stopped, with her eyes fixed on the ground-keeping by herself, and flying, above all, from the gaze of her companion, who she feared would every instant discover what she desired, above all things, should be locked up in the secresy of her own bosom.

Nor was Ginevra less agitated than herself, and perhaps the struggles she suffered sprang from more potent and serious causes. The love she cherished for the young knight, begotten and nourished by a long intimacy, and a feeling of obligation that she owed to him everything, had now, by their common danger, become more intense than ever. The thought that a glorious death might snatch him from her for ever, and the virtuous remorse (for collision against almost insuperable

obstacles always fires the passions of the soul) which admonished her of her duty to seek every means of returning to her husband, and tear herself from him, who, notwithstanding their unchangeable virtue, held her on the brink of the precipice.

She remembered she had promised God and the saint of the convent to reveal to Ettore the resolution she had made to abandon him; and she found an excuse in reflecting that on the very day she was to make the announcement, he had come with the news of the challenge. But still she felt, in her inmost soul, that while this cause might justify her in a momentary delay, it did not release her from her obligation. Besides these thoughts, which made her wretched enough, a painful jealousy of her companion had begun to torment her mind. Women have an intuitive sense, I might almost say an instinct, to guide them in detecting the passion of love, even when hidden in the depths of the heart. Ginevra soon saw the change that had come over Zoraide, and she divined but too well its secret. Several days passed after this discovery was made, but that unbosomed and affectionate intimacy, which had so long existed between them, was destroyed for ever.

Meanwhile in the convent there was no other theme for Gennaro, the nuns, and the soldiers of the tower, to talk about, but the fêtes to be given at Barletta. All who were called to the city for business, returned to tell of the preparations, and all that was said about the approaching festivals. And when that anxiously wished for morning came, all but those who were absolutely prevented from going, went to Barletta at break of day to secure a place. The gardener, who, like all men of southern climates, was mad for amusement, dressed himself in his best clothes, with a beautiful mass of flowers in his hat, and prepared to enter his boat before daylight had hardly broke over the east. Zoraide met him on the stairs which led down to the sea, dressed with more care than the place or hour seemed to require.

"Gennaro," she said, "I would like to go with thee to

Barletta."

These words were pronounced with a kind of hesitation, so

new to Gennaro, who was accustomed to hear her speak resolutely and firmly, that he gazed steadily on her a moment before making any reply. She was mistress to do so, and would do him too much honor, and he duly regretted he could not have swept out his boat, and laid down a cloth to make her more comfortable.

"But I'll run and do it now, and be back in a moment," said he, as he mounted the steps. Zoraide seized his arm with a force which astonished him, and looking in her face a moment, he said to himself, "Is she mad or bewitched?"

The maiden had left Ginevra still in bed, for she wished to give no explanation of her visit to Barletta, which must at least seem strange, as it was the first time she had ever stepped out of the convent; and she now dreaded every moment's delay, expecting her friend would appear. But, with a few words, uttered more in a tone of command than of request, she made the gardener enter the boat, and he rowed to the city. On the way he kept up his babble, telling her it was well she had come with him, after all, for he was a friend of the cameriere (valet) of Gonzales, and no one could procure her a better place to see the spectacle. They reached the piazza of the castle just as Gonzales and his train, with the French barons, set out to meet the Donna Elvira. All the prayers of Zoraide for the gardener not to leave her alone were ineffectual; and Gennaro mingled in the crowd and dust of the cavalcade. He only consented to conduct her to the inn of Veleno, with a promise to return shortly.

Gratified beyond his expectations, he remembered his promise too late, and when he returned to accompany her to one of the boxes, he found them already crowded with spectators. He saw, at a single glance, all attempts to get a seat for his companion or himself would be utterly hopeless. By prayers and lusty pushes alternately resorted to, he at last made his way through the dense mass that had crowded up to the boxes, and crept under one of them, near the entrance the combatants were to pass in going into the arena. But he thus got himself into a place, where he could see nothing but scores of spectators' legs dangling over his head, which only provoked him

with himself for having proved so stupid a guide. Luckily, however, at the moment the bull was turned into the arena, Fanfulla da Lodi, who had the management of the fight, came out, and seeing Zoraide looking anxiously about, he cast his eye on the gardener, who implored him in the following man-

"Excellency! Illustrissima! Pity this poor Signora, who is

dying to see the plays, we got here late * *."

Zoraide perceiving in the warm sparkling glance of the young knight to whom he directed this request, something more than a mere desire to find her a seat, gave Gennaro a punch to stop his clack, and Fanfulla approached her, and taking her by the hand, led her out behind the large boxes, opening a way through the crowd with a cudgel, and looked

up to see where he could procure her a post.

On the last bench, in the best place entirely at his ease, with his legs sprawled out, and his arms folded on his breast, to his great misfortune sat the Conestabile of the Tower of Ursula, Martino Schwarzenbach. Fanfulla would not have missed this very chance at that moment for a thousand ducats. With his long cudgel he could reach to the German's heel, who was nearly twice a man's height from the ground. He tapped him gently, and he turned round to see who it was. Fanfulla very composedly raised his hand to his forehead, and moving his fingers up and down with a slight inclination of his head, one side accompanied by a significant hint from the eye and mouth, gave him to understand, in no dubious manner, that he was to abandon his post for the lady he conducted.

The expression on his face would have stirred up the ire of a dead man. Martino feeling secure in his high post, and thinking most likely, too, at that moment of the half barrel of wine, replied only by an impudent shrug of his shoulders, which seemed to say, "Take yourself off," and resumed his

former position.

"German! German!" cried out Fanfulla, shaking his head, and lifting his voice, "dost thou want a good load of wood to carry? I tell thee to settle up thy accounts; thou hast had thy sight of the games for to-day!"

Martino moved not, however; he only muttered something in a low voice, which showed he had no little dread of his adversary, although far below him. Sooner done than said, Fanfulla leaped on to a beam laid crosswise, and seizing the Conestabile by the legs, who taken unawares could not help himself, brought him tumbling down from his elevation. It was his intention to bring him to the ground by a single jerk, but poor Martino was stopped in his fall by two timbers, through which his belly could find no passage, and he groaned out:

"Misericordia! Help." Fanfulla still plied him with licks, thrusts and blows, till he at last found his way to terra-firma, covered with scratches and bruises. He brought his fêtes to a

close, by very quietly telling him:

"I'm really grieved at heart for all this, but did I not tell thee thou hadst seen all the games thou wouldst see to-day?" He then carefully assisted Zoraide to ascend to the place with Gennaro, and disappeared in the crowd, laughing at the thousand curses the German sent after him. Martino went on, rubbing and feeling of himself to see if any of his bones were broken, and when he had finished his examinations, he gathered up his cap and his gloves, and took himself off, thinking busily how he should take revenge.

Zoraide in the meantime had safely seated herself in the place won for her by the victory of Fanfulla, where she had a full view of the entire amphitheatre. Her eye wandered round over the crowd, and fixed upon a box on the opposite side, where she saw Ettore seated at the side of the Donna Elvira among the noblest barons, showing, by his gallant courtesy, he was well worthy of being chosen knight of the day. The young Spanish maiden, with her warm heart, and fervid and fanciful genius, desired perhaps to attribute these attentions to a cause which would have flattered her vanity and her heart. There were two female spectators of their conversation, who, although at different distances, and with dissimilar sentiments, lost, however, not a sign that passed between them. Zoraide was seated too far from them to hear their words, but she watched all their movements and expressions so intensely, she could not but perceive how well the daughter of Gonzales

appreciated the brave Italian at her side; she saw, too, that she gazed on him with a sentiment deeper than a courteous recognition of gallantry required. She could not divine the thoughts of Fieramosca, but a heart that felt as hers, did that day tremble at a shadow. The other was Vittoria Colonna, who had learned by experience that the beautiful Elvira was not proof against the assaults of a handsome face and flattering words. She felt for her a deep and pure affection, and the troubled brow and the penetrating glance of the daughter of Fabrizio showed she saw with pain, the intimacy and fervor of their conversation, and feared the consequences.

The first bull that entered the arena had been abandoned in the outset to the multitude; many had entered to combat him, with varied fortunes, but no one had obtained a victory. From one of the side boxes, filled with Spanish and Italian barons, who had entreated him to enter the arena, Diego Garcia at last came forward to give an essay of his skill in this kind of conflict. The ability of the Matador, in Spain, consists in modern times, in being able to plunge the sword into the joint of the vertebræ of the neck, as the bull bends his head in the act of tossing his adversary on his horns into the air. But in those times, when the wielding of ponderous weapons gave prodigious force to the arms, that was esteemed the best blow which, by one cleaving stroke, separated the bull's head from his body, and those who united gigantic strength to dexterous skill often succeeded.

Paredes entered the arena, bearing his good two-handed broadsword on his left shoulder, clothed in the Matador's dress of buffalo-hide, and his head uncovered—but seeing the bull had already been wounded, and was losing blood, he beckoned to the keepers to send in a fresh one. The wounded beast was caught and led out. An enclosure was opened, and another still larger and more ferocious than the first, rushed out. Coming from the dark into the full blaze of the sun, dazzled and enraged, he began to dash wildly round the arena, as those animals usually do, till he caught sight of his antagonist, and stopped short in front of him. Throwing down his head and bellowing, with his tongue hanging nearly a foot from his

mouth, he drew himself back several paces to gain larger space for his plunge, and began pawing up the ground before him high over his head. Garcia's strength was enormous, but it would have been rash to rush upon a bull armed with such enormous horns, and a neck larger and more muscular than had perhaps ever been seen by the spectators. The Spaniard saw he must be cautious. He raised his sword with both hands over his left shoulder, and with his right foot stamped three or four times on the ground, crying out, "Ah! ah!" The bull lowered his horns, and dashed upon his enemy. When he had almost reached him, the Spaniard leaped aside and brought down his deep blade with such cleaving power, and with so much dexterity, that the head rolled to the ground, and the body made yet one or two steps, and fell, thundering, to the side of the arena.

A universal shout to Diego Garcia rent the air, and he returned and seated himself among his companions. The French knights, unaccustomed to this kind of spectacle, perceiving the ease with which the Spaniard had despatched the bull, thought it a very pretty amusement. They were men in the flower of life, and of physical force, and well-skilled in the use of arms. "Why," said they, "we can do the same thing, without a question." Foremost among these gentlemen was La Motte, who had ransomed himself from the hands of his victor Garcia.

He had a haughty nature; and he carried a poisoned tooth against him, not because he had not been honorably treated, but it seemed to him intolerable to have been worsted on the field, and he was more irritated by seeing before him the man, whom all were gazing on, who had brought him to lick the dust.

He applauded the bold stroke of Garcia; for he did not wish to appear invidious, or wanting in courtesy, but with that sort of expression the French of our times call *suffisant*, to use a word the Italians lack in their vocabulary, and drawing himself up before him to his full height, he said to him, and as was his custom, without looking him particularly in the face:—

"Brayo, Don Diego—well cleared, per N. Dame." Then turning round to one of his companions, he said with a sneer:

"Grand meschef a été que le taureau n'eut pas sa cotte de mailles: la rescousse eut été pour lui." (It is a sad mistake, the bull had not a coat of mail on his neck—the tables would have been turned.)

Paredes overheard him, and his ire burned, as he said to himself, "Voto a Dios que he de saber si ese perro Frances tiene los dientes tan largos como la lengua." (By God, I'll see if this French dog has teeth as long as his tongue."

Stepping up to him he said, "How many handsome gold ducats would it please you to pay me, if on the first trial I sever the neck of a bull covered with mail? and you can't even cut off one naked. And even without talking of ducats, for I'd not have you think Diego Garcia seeks to be paid like a torero—let us come to honor, and see if you know how to imitate my blow, as well as you know how to sneer at it!"

This challenge was not very agreeable to La Motte, and he bit his tongue for his folly in provoking it; by no means from cowardice, for he was a bold and a brave man, but being the first time he ever undertook to combat such a beast, he understood none too well how to do the work. But it was too late to retreat—he was in the presence of the wrong man, and he must leap the ditch. He boldly replied:

"For a French knight it would certainly be no dishonor to refuse to try his strength against a bull, but let it never be said that Guide de la Motte ever refused to strike a blow with his blade, let the cause be what it may—to the proof!" He rose, hissing between his teeth with rage, "Chien d' Espagnol, fi je pouvais le tenir sur dix pieds bon terrain, au lieu de ta bête!" (Dog of a Spaniard, could I but have thee on ten feet of solid ground in lieu of thy beast.) He had carefully watched, and perfectly understood how Garcia had so successfully made his master-stroke. Young, a Cavalier, a Frenchman, could he be diffident of himself!

At this challenge, so new, all the youth rose to their feet. In Gonzales' balcony, the bustle and noise were noticed, and the cause was soon known. In a few moments it had spread throughout the amphitheatre, and was received by the vast multitude with the wildest delight. True, the news in passing from mouth to mouth, had suffered strange transformations,

which became still more curious, as it descended to the lowest classes of the people. The spot where Zoraide sat being the farthest of all the amphitheatre from the balcony of Gonzales, was the very point where the news in meeting from two half circles, had become most perfectly transformed. The more distant wishing to get the report from those nearest, there followed such a waving of heads and turning of faces, that the progress of the intelligence along the dense masses of spectators could be clearly discerned. Gennaro had long been on his feet, with his neck stretched out, waiting impatiently for the first arrival of the news. He, Zoraide, and those who sat nearest, had noticed the confusion in the box of the knights and leaders, and had seen the first reports leave their box, and spread through the arena. The fête seemed interrupted. No other bull was brought out; and everybody was asking their neighbor, "what has happened? what can it be?" but without any reply-till at last the report began to go through the assembly, "The combat between the French and the Italians is coming on now in the arena." "Oh, yes!" says another, "don't you see Fieramosca there nailed to that box? and see how he talks to that young lady; it seems he's thinking of everything in the world but the combat too!"

Zoraide heard this and heaved a sigh,—she turned to the other side,—"They say the French captain has challenged Gonzales, and he who kills the wild bull from Gnarato, will have conquered in the war, and shall be lord of the realm."

In the mean while, several men who were busy about the enclosures, seemed to be preparing to unloose another bull. On one side was seen Diego Garcia with his two-handed sword on his shoulder, surrounded by a number of others who seemed to be all trying to speak at once with great earnestness, as though they were endeavoring to persuade him of something; but on his bold brow, which towered high above all the rest, could be read, even at that distance, the immoveable purpose to redeem his pledge, whatever might be the hazard. A short distance beyond, stood La Motte, surrounded by his French companions, who were beseeching him not to leave them cause for shame.

Meanwhile one of the spectators, who occupied one of the lower tiers, had just finished a conversation with Veleno who was by his side, and now turned to Gennaro:—" Say, my brave fellow, those gentlemen down there are going to try who can drink off a bottle of 'Greek' all at one breath, in the face of the bull."

A general laugh followed this nonsense, but the merriment stopped suddenly when they saw Fanfulla leading in the sergeants to clear the arena, in which remained alone and immovable, with his huge sword on his shoulder, the gigantic Spaniard.

He well knew he was pledged for a deed which could not be too easily done; that even with his Herculean strength, to try to sever the neck of a bull clad in mail, was at least a rash undertaking; and he had provided himself with another, and a much larger sword, which he used only in attacking or defending a breach. He had run to his house and ground the edge of it round, and devoured in haste all he could lay his hands on, and drank off a flask of Spanish wine. For these preparations he had had abundance of opportunity; for no little time or force were necessary to clothe the neck of a bull in a cloth of mail. It had been left open before, the arms were thrown over the horns, fitted and fastened under the neck, and extended down upon the face. Those who in our times have seen such spectacles, are aware that when these animals are taken in some dark place and once chained firmly by the horns, they can be kept perfectly quiet.

At the sound of trumpets and instruments, a king-at-arms clothed in a coat of yellow and red, bearing on his breast and back the arms of Spain, came forward, and lifting a mace as a signal for silence, proclaimed with a loud voice:—

"In the name of His Catholic Majesty, Ferdinando, King of Castile, Leon, the Kingdom of Granada, the Indies of the West, etc., etc.; Don Gonzales Hernandez de Cordova, Marquis d'Almenarez, Commander Cavalier of the order of St. James, Captain and Governor for His most Catholic Majesty, etc.; prohibits all here present, under the penalty of two lashes, and even more if so adjudged, from disturbing by voices, cries,

signs, or in any other manner, the combat about to be fought against an armed bull by the most illustrious and magnificent cavalier Don Diego Manrique de Lara, Count of Paredes."

A blast then came from the trumpets, and the spectators of every class,-some through courtesy, well knowing that on a single false step might depend the life of the intrepid Spaniard; others through fear of the lash,—all remained immovable; and so hushed was the silence, that when the enclosure opened, the rattling of the bolt was the only sound that could be heard throughout the amphitheatre. The bull came out, but not like the others. He was of a smaller frame, short, deep-chested, and all black; but infinitely more furious. He likewise stopped short about ten paces from the knight; and fixing his eyes on him, began to toss his head and paw up the dirt into the air. His adversary, with his sword lifted, was all watchfulness; for well he knew it might prove fatal to him if the first stroke failed. At last the animal started-slowly the first few steps, and then, by a sudden plunge, he rushed bellowing, with his head lowered, upon Don Garcia. Thinking to despatch him as he had the other, he sprang aside a step or two, and levelled his blow with tremendous strength-but, either the sword not falling on the edge, or the bull making a false step, it glanced from the mail, and the animal turned upon him with such fury, that the Spaniard had hardly time to plant the point of his sword against the corselet of the bull's head to stop his plunge. Here Paredes showed his enormous strength. his legs braced one before the other, the massive sword held with both hands—the pommel against his breastplate and the point firmly fixed on the forehead of the bull-he held the wild beast at bay! The strong, thick steel resisted the proofbut so terrible was the trial to Diego Garcia, the muscles in his legs, and particularly in his thighs, swelled and trembled like the veins in his neck and forehead; his face reddened till it took the hue of purple, and he bit his lower lip so deeply, his chin was bathed in blood.

Seeing himself thus frustrated, the bull retreated, and when he had gained sufficient distance, plunged forward again with redoubled fury. Garcia felt maddened with shame for having failed; he cast a glance like a flash of lightning towards the box of La Motte, and he saw a triumphant smile of scorn on his face. The sight filled him with such infernal rage, that his strength knew no limits; he raised his sword as high as he could reach, and brought it down on the bull's neck with such cleaving ruin, he would have severed it had it been solid brass. But this blow, levelled with such phrenzy, did not fall straight; it first lopped off one horn as clean as though it had been a rush; then severed the mail and the vertebræ, and stopped only with the thick hide of the neck on the lower side, which left the head still hung to the body by a piece of skin, as the wild beast rolled on the arena.

At this incredible display of strength, there rose a shout of admiration, so deafening and instantaneous, it seemed like a burst of thunder. Paredes dropped his sword to his feet, and remained immovable a few moments, as the deep vermillion on his face changed to a deathlike paleness. But it soon passed away. His friends gathered around him with triumphant greetings;—one was astonished at his power; another at the strength of his sword; another at the depth of the wound, or the neatness with which the head was severed; and at the same time the band was playing airs of victory.

The Spaniard had redeemed his pledge—now came the turn for La Motte. The master-stroke of his antagonist staggered him; he could not hope to equal it, and even should he susceed (which was more than doubtful) in severing the naked neck of a bull, it would be sure to be esteemed a less praiseworthy feat, and his inexperience in this species of combat warned him of his probable failure even in such an attempt. But he saw that he had at all events gone too far to be able to retreat with honor, and his mortification nearly turned his brain.

When the Spaniard came forward to ask him if he was ready to enter the arena, he gave a negative and insulting reply, declaring that the French knights with a lance in the saddle had no equals in the world, and as noble cavaliers they would combat and conquer those who vaunted themselves as their equals in fair battle—the art of killing bulls they left to

villains and serfs—he might therefore take himself off and tease him no longer.

To these insulting words Diego Garcia replied in a still more haughty and cutting manner. Both laid their hands on their swords, and the disturbance in the box of the cavaliers attracted the gaze of Gonzales, the Duke of Nemours and all the spectators. In a single word another challenge ensued, and Garcia, transported with rage, in a high and terrible voice called on the French knights to meet him on horse, promising to show them that even there they were not only their equals but their masters.

The captains of France and of Spain saw with pleasure the martial spirit in their armies, inflamed by these sports, and the deeds of the old days sung by poets and troubadours seemed about to return. They accorded license also for this challenge, and in a few moments the number and names of the combatants were decided. They were to meet each other ten to ten in two days along the sea shore on the road to Bari. But an injunction was laid as the condition of the permission, that during the day not a word should be spoken of the approaching combat, that the gaiety of the fêtes might not be disturbed. The knights on both sides promised to observe this command, and shaking each other by the hand in token of their pledge, they all returned quietly to their respective places.

In the meantime the men who had the care of the arena dragged off the body of the last bull, and scattering sand and sawdust over the spot where he had fallen, every trace of blood disappeared. Fanfulla, the chief director, was ordered by Gonzales to prepare everything for the tournament. In a few minutes a board partition was raised in the form of a wall in the middle of the arena, supported by beams morticed beforehand for the purpose. It extended across the arena like the axis of an ellipse, and was as high as the breast of an ordinary man. The two ends did not touch the circumference, and a space was left under the boxes to admit the passage of three horses abreast. According to this arrangement when a lance was to be broken, the two knights took opposite sides, so that the partition should be between them, and on the right hand

of each combatant. As they spurred on their horses in the ring they were to make their passes on the run. This mode was easier and less dangerous, for the horse could not mistake his track, and the knight knew the exact spot where he would find his adversary. On both sides of the arena was placed a hogshead filled with sand in which were standing lances of every size, which the combatants were to seize in passing when their own were broken, and neither was unhorsed. Each one was then to return again to the engagement, and take the side just occupied by his antagonist.

When everything was ready, Fanfulla went up to the balcony where Donna Elvira sat, and told her she was expected to give the signal. The daughter of Gonzales threw her hand-kerchief into the arena; at the same moment the trumpets sounded, and three Spaniards came in on horseback, clothed in the brightest burnished steel, with plumes, and richly embroidered dresses, all forming a gorgeous spectacle, offering to keep the field with three trials of the lance, and two of the battle-axe, against any one who would come forward.

The champions were D. Louis de Correa, Y. Xarcio, Don Inigo, Lope de Ayala, and D. Ramon, Blsaco Azevedo. The herald preceded them, proclaiming their names, and prohibiting, as usual, all spectators from participating either by words or deeds. The shields of the Spaniards were hung up under the balcony of Gonzales, with their names written in letters of gold; while their owners, after riding round the arena, stationed themselves on one side under the great standard, on which were embroidered the towers and lions of Castile, and the bars of Arragon, which was held by a herald richly dressed, and floated over their heads.

The prize destined for the victor was a helmet richly garnished with a Victory of silver for a crest, holding in one hand a palm of gold, and in the other the plume of the helmet—it was the work of the chisel of Raffaello del Moro, the celebrated Florentine artist. It was placed on the point of a lance fixed near the entrance where the three Spaniards had passed.

Bajardo, the mirror and the glory of chivalry, was the first

to appear in the lists. He rode a beautiful bay of Normandy, with three gaily spotted feet, and a black mane. The beautiful proportions of his charger, according to the customs of the times, were concealed by an immense saddle-cloth, which reached from head to tail, of a bright green, with bars of vermillion, with the Knight's arms embroidered on the shoulder and flank, and bordered by a rich drapery which hung down to the knees of the horse; on his head and neck were floating masses of plumes of the same colors that were seen on the handle of his lance and the plume of his helmet. There was nothing peculiar in the proportions of the knight, and from what might be judged to be under the armor, he did not even promise the ordinary vigor of the warriors of those times. He rode in, curbing his horse, which, nettled by the spur, pulled on his rein, and proudly pranced on, arching his neck, and turning his head from side to side, as his waving tail swept the ground.

He stopped before Donna Elvira, and lowering his lance to salute her, he struck with it three blows upon Inigo's shield. Then passing it into his left hand, which held, already, bridle and shield, he took his battle-axe which hung from his belt, and touched the shield of Correa; thus signifying he accepted three strokes of the lance with the first, and two of the axe with the second. He then drove back to the entrance of the amphitheatre. At the same moment Inigo was at his place on the side opposite, both with one end of his lance on his thigh and the point in the air. Bajardo, who till now had kept his visor raised, showing a face so deadly pale, that every one was astonished to see him take the field that day, now let it fall over his face, and had it shut by his esquire, to whom he said, that in spite of the ague (under which he had suffered for four months) he believed he should not bring dishonor upon the French arms that day.

As the third blast of the clarion sounded, one common spirit seemed to animate the two warriors and their steeds. Bending on their lances, striking their spurs, and launching on the course with the swiftness of an arrow, were simultaneous movements, and both knights executed them with equal swiftness and fury. Inigo aimed at the helmet of his antagonist a

sure but not an easy blow; but as he approached him, thinking in the gaze of such an audience it were better to try something that could not fail, he contented himself by shivering his lance against his shield. The French knight, who was perhaps the most skilful manager of arms in those times, aimed so sure a blow against the visor of Inigo, that had they been standing still he could not have struck him fairer. Sparks of fire rolled off the helmet, the lance broke two feet from the heel, and the Spaniard reeled so far over the left side of his saddle that his foot slipped from the stirrups, and he nearly fell to the gound. Bajardo thus bore off the honor of this first encounter.

The two champions went on their course, to meet on the other side; and Inigo, casting his broken lance in fret to the

ground, snatched another from the stand as he passed.

At the second trial the blows were equal; and Inigo secretly doubted, perhaps, if the courtesy of the French knight had not prevented him from displaying his full prowess. The third time this doubt became certainty. Inigo broke his lance against the visor of his enemy, who so lightly brushed his gauntlet with his steel, as they passed, that he knew the failure was not an accident. The trumpets sounded, and the acclamations and the heralds proclaimed that the valor of the combatants was equal. They rode on, side by side, under the balcony of Donna Elvira, to make their reverence, while the lady answered them with words of praise. Gonzales did not withhold his admiration, nor the Duke of Nemours, who said to the champions:

" Chevaliers, c'est bel et bon."

Inigo was one of those who can bear to be surpassed in everything else, but never in generosity; and he recognized the courtesy shown to him by Bajardo. But, with that modesty which always adorns virtue, the French knight resolutely denied it, and declared that he had done his best. Gonzales terminated this strife of courtesy by saying—"From your words, Cavaliers, some doubt might arise who of you have borne the best lance to day; but one thing cannot be doubted—in all the world, there are none nobler or more generous than you."

CHAPTER XIII.

At the blast of the trumpet Correa appeared on the arena, armed with a battle-axe and a small round shield, to answer the challenge of Bajardo, who had mounted a fresh horse and prepared himself for the combat. The two combatants did not, as before, dash against each other at full speed, but with their reins tightly drawn, and their spurs still, they rode up, at

a half gallop, till they were nearly together.

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In this trial, velocity of movement could not serve, as in hurling a lance, to add impetus to the blow. Merit here consisted far more in vigor of arm, and in knowing well how to manage their horses, that, when they reared, their riders could choose the moment of their forward plunge to hurl the blow against the enemy's helmet; and when this was well done, it generally drove from his saddle the man on whom it fell. At the first encounter, the two steeds, perfectly trained and managed, reared and plunged together, and their riders were so entirely protected by their shields, they could neither of them be struck as they passed. The second meeting had the same result. Perceiving the play of his adversary, Bajardo came on the third time with greater fury, and Correa met him with the same violence: but when they had nearly reached each other, the Frenchman, by a sudden movement, threw his horse back on his haunches, just at the moment his enemy, who, expecting nothing of the kind, had lifted his weapon into the air, and levelled a blow which fell without effect. Bajardo seized the moment, and raising his weapon with incredible swiftness with both hands, as he drove the spurs into his horse and rose in the saddle, he struck a terrible blow upon the helmet of Correa, which brought him down on the neck of his

horse; and when the spectators were waiting for him to raise up his head, he rolled senseless to the ground, and was borne by his esquires from the arena. Bajardo also went out, saluting the balcony of Donna Elvira, amidst the plaudits of the whole amphitheatre, while the blasts of the clarion sounded his victory. He was soon recalled, however, to combat Azevedo, who had come forward to take up the challenge of his companion. The contest was long and nobly disputed; but the

French cavalier finally won the day.

Outside the entrance to the amphitheatre a large enclosure had been prepared, where the knights who entered the lists could keep their horses and servants, and arm themselves for the combat. Here Gonzales had provided all that was necessary for their engagements. There were several tables to place arms on, a forge and a small portable furnace to adjust any portion of armor, and, last of all, a buffet of food and wine. Brancaleone had been charged to see that nothing was wanting, and every service rendered, the occasion might require. While he was at his post, Grajano d'Asti, whom he recognized as the man he had seen when he bore with Fieramosca the challenge to the French camp, arrived, with two esquires, who carried his armor and led in his battle-horse. Brancaleone, who, as usual, had till now said very little, stepped forward to greet Grajano, and received him with more courtesy than he was accustomed to show. One who knew him would have believed, to have seen him then, he was moved by some concealed motive in his cordial greeting. He had, in fact, an object to accomplish of no little importance, as will presently appear.

After the first reception, and proffers of services, he accommodated him with all he could desire, and drew him into conversation, while his esquires aided him in taking off the rich robes in which he was dressed, to make way for his close-fitting garments of skin, over which a suit of armor was to be worn. That of Grajano was beautifully variegated by stripes of gold over the burnished steel, which lay in pieces on the table. Brancaleone examined it, piece by piece, with great attention, and taking in his hand the breast-plate, to aid in putting it on the cavalier, he observed it was made of

double plates of steel, which seemed impenetrable. The cuirass was double, and of equal strength—he took up the arm-pieces, the thigh-plates and greaves, and his practised

eye saw they would resist every proof.

While he was making this examination, a sagacious observer would have detected a certain strange expression around his forehead, and a curious smile around his mouth—but there was no one who saw him at that moment. The helmet only remaining, to complete his equipments, Brancaleone took it up, and examining it, soon discovered it did not correspond in strength with the rest of the armour, and he asked Grajano if he was not accustomed to wear, underneath, a tight-fitting head-piece of iron. Being told he did not, he demanded why, after covering the rest of his body with such impenetrable armour, he should not take equal precaution in the defence of his head.

"Because," replied Grajano, "at the assault of a contemptible castle, worth about three quattrini (and that fool, the Duke of Montpensier, was bent on taking it), while I was placing a ladder to mount the wall, one of the Abruzzesi villains who defended it threw down a stone upon my head, which crushed my helmet, and cut a hole into my head which will most likely close up entirely, when they throw the last spadeful of dirt on to me—look here!" Suiting the action to the word, he took his hand, and lifting it to the top of his head, put one of his fingers into a gash in the cranium, which plainly showed he once wore a thick helmet.

"For this wound, hang the devil who gave it me, I lost many a shining ducat; for I was obliged to leave King Charles, and stay several months in Rome, till I was restored. True, indeed," he added, laughing, "that occasion served to rid me of the encumbrance of a certain wife I had * * so you see there was a little good and a little evil in the business. I afterwards entered the pay of that villain, Valenza, until, as God had willed it, I returned to the French, and with them I find, at least, it don't always rain or snow on our head, and at the end of every month there roll out as handsome florins

as the bank Martelli of Florence can furnish."

"But this helmet," replied Brancaleone; "how would it resist a heavy blow?"

"Oh!" answered Grajano, "as to that I give myself very little trouble. First of all, it's Damascus steel, and of a temper that 'll defy the world to better; and then I tell thee that when I find in battle those who want to brush away the flies from my face, I make such a use of my shield, that he must be a brave fellow who gets near enough to do it. Look," said he, showing the shield and the chain by which he fastened it to his neck, "look how I hold it at arms-length to have full room to swing."

Brancaleone made no further reply; again he observed most carefully the helmet, turning it round on all sides, and sounding it with his knuckles in a way peculiarly his own; he then opened it and adjusted it himself to the knight's head.

During this time the battle had been going on between the three Spaniards and Bajardo, in the manner we have already related. The latter had come off conqueror, and entered the tent just as Grajano had finished his armor, and was preparing to mount his horse. The Knight of Asti addressed some courteous words to the victor, and perceiving Brancaleone was not giving heed to their conversation, he asked him how much the prowess of their adversaries was worth. Taking off his iron gauntlets and helmet, and throwing them down on the table as the sweat streamed from his brow, he replied:

"Don Inigo de Ayala, bonne lance, foi de chevalier." And even to the rest he accorded the praises he felt were due them, and he gave some hints to the warrior who was going out to combat about the way he should conduct himself, that all might not be lost.

Grajano entered the arena well mounted on a beautiful black charger, covered with an orange saddle-cloth, with a herald before him, proclaiming his name in a loud voice. The knight then rode under the balcony of Gonzales, and struck with his lance three times upon the shields of Azevedo and Inigo. When Fiearamosca heard that name pronounced, an instantaneous and involuntary tremor ran through every fibre of his body. He was again stung with remorse for having concealed from

Ginevra that he was alive; and as all men are more ready to make good resolutions when the execution of them is left to the future, he determined to unfold everything to her at their first meeting.

The combat meanwhile began, and the Piedmontese, who was esteemed one of the first combatants in strength and skill in managing weapons, obtained a decided advantage over Azevedo, although he did not unhorse him, and even in his encounter with Inigo, he bore himself so well, the universal decision was in his favor. A number of French knights followed him, De La Paline, Chandenier, Obigni, and last of all, La Motte, who had become so enraged by his encounter with Diego Garcia about the bull, that he astonished by his feats the whole amphitheatre.

To tell the truth, the three Spaniards, who had undertaken to defend the field, had the worst, and they were forced themselves to confess they had attempted a work for which their power gave them no justification, in calling out the best swords of the French army. But Inigo and Azevedo were still in the saddle, and Grajano, who had already combated them once, appeared against them again. He was probably not a little favored by their exhaustion after so many encounters, but however this may have been, he had the fortune of bringing the tournament to a close, and was declared the victor of the day. He received from the hands of Donna Elvira, the gorgeous helmet, as the reward of his victory, with the blasts of the trumpets, and the acclamations of the whole amphitheatre.

The fête being finished, Gonzales rose, and accompanied by his daughter, the Captain of France, and the train of barons, he returned to the castle, where the tables were being prepared for the approaching banquet. The arena and amphitheatre were soon emptied of spectators who went in crowds, visitors and citizens, to their respective houses, or to the inns of the town, particularly to Veleno's, who had made his preparations to entertain his guests where they could gossip over the varied incidents of the day.

On the morning of this day in which fortune had prepared

so many bitter strokes for Ginevra, she woke an hour later than usual. Distracted more wildly than ever by her tormenting reflections, she had only fallen to sleep after daylight, and when she slept, a hundred wild fantasies crowded on her brain. Now she saw Fieramosca wounded and turning his eye glazing in death to her for help-again she saw him come off conqueror, crowned with glory, standing among barons, and casting a contemptuous glance on her as he turned to another fair one and gave his right hand. And yet, when she slept, she comforted herself by saying:—"Oh! how happy I am, this is only a dream." But she shuddered, for she seemed even to hear the revelry of the bridal banquet of Ettore, the gay chiming of bells, and the thunder of artillery. At last the noise came rushing towards the balcony that looked out on Barletta. She saw that if all the rest were a dream, the noise which had woke her was a reality. She sat up in bed, and drawing out from under the counterpanes her delicate round foot, white as snow, she hid it in a vermillion slipper, while she laced a blue dress over her chemise, and threw her long chestnut hair back of her shoulders. She rose and seated herself under the vineleaves of the balcony, gazing on the majestic picture which lay before her, as her eyes were dazzled by the light pouring down from the serene limpid heavens.

The sun which had already been risen for two hours, bathed the shore of the sea, the castle, and the city, with a flood of light. From time to time globes of pearl-colored smoke, streaked with tongues of fire, burst forth over the old towers and battlements, and glittering pure white in the rays of the sun, changed into a thousand involutions as they went wreathing up into heaven. A few moments after the report came pealing over the water, and went rolling in broken undulations along the shores of the sea, till it finally lost itself in a faint echo among the distant ravines of the mountains. The castle and the city for a while enveloped in smoke, shortly borne away by the breeze from the ocean, lay shadowed on the bosom of the calm blue sea, which slept so tranquilly, their outline was perfectly distinct in the tremulous water. The sound of the bells and the instruments came full or faintly, as

the breeze wafted it on; and in the repose of the convent, at intervals, even the huzzas and acclamations of the people for the Captain of Spain could be distinctly heard. But neither these notes of universal gladness, nor the smiling picture under her eye could dispel the gloom which oppressed Ginevra's

spirit.

To the sting of remorse another equally terrible had been added—the suspicion of being betrayed by him for whom she had made the immense sacrifice of turning a deaf ear to the voice of conscience, and the calls of duty. It was a doubt her soul spurned, and her heart abhorred; but the doubt had at last arisen, and he who has made the trial may say, if doubt can be dissipated as easily as it can be begotten. And in truth, were what she feared entirely false, many a circumstance had

conspired to give it the appearance of truth.

Although Ettore had succeeded in concealing from her his meeting with Grajano, yet, accustomed as he had always been to reveal to her everything, he could not so perfectly deceive her, that she should not discover he had some secret in his heart he did not wish entirely to disclose. And besides, the great change she had observed in the manner of Zoraide, had planted another thorn in her heart, which she tried in vain to eradicate. "Who," thought she, "can assure me that even Ettore himself had not made the discovery? Who knows but he loves her?" And when she sought to draw from all these arguments some conclusion, she lost herself in a labyrinth of doubts, from which she could not escape.

Weary of her own thoughts, she rose to seek some one to converse with, to try to forget such harassing reflections. She looked for Zoraide, and she was not in the house—she descended to the garden, but still she found her not. She inquired for her in the convent of the few who still remained, but no one knew where she was. She felt a weight fall on her heart, and a thousand misty suspicions clouded her brain. In her search she had gone as far as the tower which guarded the entrance to the island. She found it utterly abandoned—not a single guard was left—the Conestabile had gone to the town, and was soon followed by every one of his men. She

passed the bridge, and walked some distance along the shore with the sea on her right, and on her left the slopes of the mountains covered with thick bushes. She walked on slowly, her mind too absorbed in bitter thoughts to heed what was taking place around her. She was suddenly surprised by a noise she heard in the bushes, and frightened by the sight of a man creeping forth covered with bloody rags all lacerated by thorns, with his long tangled hair dangling over his face. He raised himself up with difficulty, and then fell again upon his knees. She thought she would fly, but she boldly resolved not to do it. Looking carefully upon the poor creature who had thus mysteriously appeared before her, she gradually recognized the features of the Capo-banda Pietraccio, whom, according to the advice of Don Michele, she had involuntarily, with Fieramosca, aided in making his escape. The matter had succeeded just as this creature of Valentino had forewarned him; for while they were trying to render some help to his mother, Pietraccio had seized his chance, and escaped by the stairway, and afterwards through the door. For although he was wounded and pursued by several of the guards, he had succeeded, by means of his dagger, in making his escape, and practised as he was in such tricks he had concealed himself in the bushes, where he eluded all search. To escape the hands of those who were on his track he was obliged to live miserably concealed in the deepest thickets of the wood; and now finding himself by chance near one he could not fear and who he hoped would prove his liberator, half dead with exhaustion and famine he threw himself on her mercy, with signs to make her acquainted with his misery, which his aspect too clearly demonstrated. Ginevra's dread and compassion were aroused at the sight of the wretch, and she told him to fear nothing, for in the convent there were none but the nuns, and as the tower was not guarded he could come with her and she would conceal him in a secret place under her house till he was recovered. The assassin, who would perhaps have chosen death itself rather than his present misery, followed her, and, without being seen, reached his hiding-place; where the compassionate Ginevra furnished him with food and bandaged up his wounds, which, although light, needed a remedy, and with a little straw she prepared him a bed. She went back again to the house just as Zoraide and Gennaro returned from Barletta. She could not refrain from administering to her friend a gentle reproof for having left without saying to her a word.

"My Zoraide—I have suffered great solicitude in searching for thee in vain in every part of the island—Why didst thou

not tell me thou wert going away?"

"Not to awake thee," answered Zoraide—but the insincerity of this reply tinged her cheek with a light blush which did not escape the eyes of Ginevra—she continued—"I set out this morning very early with Gennaro * * and"

"And yesterday evening," replied Ginevra, smiling, "thou

didst not know thou wert going to the tournament ?"

This interrogation, so pointedly spoken, brought a shade of

displeasure over Zoraide's face who briefly replied:-

"Yes, * * I had an idea of it," * * and then resuming the thread of conversation which had been interrupted, she continued—"For a long time I have desired a sight of such games to see if they really surpass so much those of the Arabs—But praise God! what is done here by knights and nobles is done with us by slaves, and no one of our chiefs would expose his life to amuse three or four thousand of the lowest populace."

Aware that Zoraide had resorted to this *ruse* to avoid a more minute account of her visit to the town, Ginevra insisted no farther, and simply replied: "Well, it appears the tournament

has been beautiful."

"Beautiful? I'll tell you," exclaimed Gennaro, who was dying with agony to play off the historian, and beginning with the departure of Gonzales from the castle, he described as well as he could the gorgeous splendor of the barons; and then, with the idea of saying something that would prove particularly agreeable, continued with a toss of the head and a smack of the lips, as his hands kept his cap in a ceaseless whirl:

"If you had but seen your brother on the back of that silvercolored horse! Everybody exclaimed, oh! what a handsome young knight! and to tell the truth with that splendid blue mantle he was a real picture. I was half crushed to death following on with the crowd out of the gate. There was need of good elbows I tell you. Yes! but when the daughter of Gonzales descended from her litter, I was as near to her as I am to you, and Sig. Ettore aided her to mount her horse; but I'll describe it better, she stepped one foot on his knee, and one of her little feet so, you see (and to show the measure he held out his right thumb, marking off the end with his forefinger), and up she went like a cricket; and do you know what I tell you, your brother wasn't a very disagreeable companion for her neither, when she was in the saddle; she said some flattering things to him, and she poured out her smiles on him. Happy the man on whom they were bestowed, and, as for him, why he couldn't help blushing, and God only knows what passed between them, but thinks I to myself, it looks as though Sig. Ettore had an idea of becoming a married man, and I tell you they'd make a beautiful match, they seem to be made expressly for each other."

The reader may decide for himself how agreeable all this was to Ginevra. Unable to endure his gossip any longer, and

wishing to get away from him, she briefly replied:

"Yes, yes! * * * but you may tell me all about it another time," and then turned to accompany Zoraide to their apartment. But Gennaro's tongue was too well started to be sud-

denly stopped, and on he went.

"But all this is nothing! you ought to have seen him at the tournament in the knights' box, always by her side, and both of them doing nothing but talk, talk all the while, and here's Signora Zoraide who will tell you that everybody there noticed it. Besides, there was the host of the inn, who provided the castle with wine, and he said her father was determined the marriage should take place; it would be a grand affair, don't you think so? oh! how many thousand bright ducats! A little better this than to spend a life in the saddle, in rain and in storm?"

To put an end to this chattering, which wounded her too

deeply, although she was conscious her own vanity was at fault, Ginevra responded:

"But the tournament, how went the tournament?"

"Oh the tournament! such a sight, as Barletta never saw before?" And here commencing with the bull-fight and the prowess of Don Garcia, he described the combats with battleaxes and lances, repeating the names announced by the heralds. His memory served him even too well, and when he was about concluding he said:

"But the one who finished the tournament, and unhorsed the three Spaniards one after the other, was Sig. D. Grajano

d'Asti."

"Who! who!" exclaimed Ginevra, with an agitation of voice she could not conceal.

"A certain Sig. D. Grajano d'Asti; he must be a great baron, for his armor and dress alone were a fortune."

"Grajano d'Asti, sayest thou? Large? Small? Young? how was he?"

Gennaro, who had not overlooked the most minute point of the arms, the physiognomy or aspect of one of the combatants, and recalling perfectly the features of Grajano, which he had exposed by entering the arena with a raised visor, gave so graphic a picture of the knight, that the last doubt was removed from Ginevra's mind, that he was her husband. But she had sufficient control over herself, partly to conceal her agitation, and to feel the infinite importance of remaining undiscovered. While Gennaro was trying to give her an exact idea of the form and features of the baron, she had time to recover her self-possession, and conscious that her two listeners had remarked her agitation when she heard that name pronounced, she endeavored to dissipate their suspicion by saying, as the gardener concluded:

"You need not be astonished I was agitated when I heard his name; strange occurrences once took place between him and my house, they were all happily terminated at last, and every occasion for scandal has long ago passed away; but I would sooner have expected anything else, rather than to hear of him here in Barletta, and last of all in the pay of the French."

When she had said these words, she turned to go to her room. From the perceptible change which gradually spread over her countenance, Zoraide and Gennaro could not but discover that some harrowing thought of deep importance distressed her, but they refrained from following her. When she had left them the gardener said to the maiden:

"I think she feels ill. Perhaps I've said something I ought not to have done."

Zoraide, who was thinking of something quite the contrary, and could neither herself define the thoughts or suspicions which agitated her, answered only by a shrug of the shoulders and turned away, desiring, no less than Ginevra, to be left alone. Gennaro, left standing with his hat still in his hand, went off about his business grumbling:

"Oh! they're all alike, and the fellow who can understand them must be a brave one."

Ginevra, in the meantime, had begun to mount the stairway to her chamber, but at every step she felt as though the burden of a world had been thrown on her shoulders. Her respiration became shorter, and her heart beat so violently, she almost fainted; she murmured continually, "Oh, Virgin Mother, help me;" and at last her desperation became so overwhelming, she could only utter, "my God! my God!" She had hardly been able to mount the fourth step, when her knees gave way, and she fell down exhausted. Her breathing was hurried and broken, and as the cold sweat of a spasm rolled from her forehead, she thought, "To-morrow morning I shall not be alive." She had heard Zoraide pass round to her room on the other side and shut herself in, and she knew that the nuns had retired from the heat of the afternoon to repose themselves in their cells; but still the fear of being discovered where she was, added still more to her agony, and to escape all risk, she abandoned the thought of trying to get up to her room, and resolved to pass by the private postern of the cloister, and seek refuge in the church, where she felt she must then go, if ever, to implore help from on high. She bent her way to the

place as well as she could, supporting herself by the walls part of the time, and then trying to walk on as usual, seeing occasionally some novice passing along the galleries, or the hood of a nun from the window.

There was no one in the church, and she sank down on the first bench of the choir near by, and sat for some time, with her head reposing in her hands and her elbows resting on her knees, to gather strength; while a confused train of images rushed so wildly through her mind, all thought was banished. Behind the grand altar, a flight of marble steps descended to a small subterranean chapel, where five lamps of silver were kept burning day and night, before an image of the mother of God, believed universally to have been painted by St. Luke. The miracles said to have been performed in this place, had given origin, in after times, to the construction of the church and the convent. The chapel was in the form of a hexagon; and on the side facing the stairs were the altar and the image. At each angle, a column, surmounted with capitals of large leaves, sculptured in antique style, supported one of the groins of the vault, which all united at the top to sustain a a large flat stone, with an aperture in the centre of the size of a cubit, covered by an iron grating, which opened in the church above on the platform before the principal altar. A bright ray of the sun, which entered through the stained glass of one of the large windows in the vault, found its way through the grating into the chapel below. In the form of a distinct ray, it penetrated the dark gloom of the place, partially dispelled only by the red and feeble light of the lamps, and left on the floor the form of the grating, and the colors of the window through which it had passed. Ginevra descended, and in going forward to kneel at the foot of the altar, this bright sunbeam struck her blue robe as she passed under the vault, and for a moment lit up, like a flickering lamp, every part of the chapel.

With her hands pressed close to her bosom, and her eyes fixed on the picture, she began to pray. By degrees she felt the throbbing of her pulses diminish, and her bosom grow calm from its heavings. Her prayers were not so distinctly

uttered in words as conceived in her heart, but they gave peace to her troubled spirit.

Like all very ancient images, on the countenance of the Madonna was depicted a melancholy so divine and august, it seemed to the youthful but afflicted supplicant, to feel compassion for her suffering; and she gazed on it so long and so earnestly, she seemed to see a flash of life in the eyes which inspired her with a holy awe—but still she was comforted. "Glorious and Holy Virgin," she at last murmured, struggling

"Glorious and Holy Virgin," she at last murmured, struggling with deep feelings, "who am I, that I should merit thy compassion? And yet to whom can I go for help but to thee? I lay my sorrows at thy feet. Thou seest I cannot bear up against this trial, nor am I worthy to be delivered from it. Oh! compassionate Virgin, nerve my heart with power to do all I would love to do!" And with her eyes still fixed on the Virgin as the tears bathed her cheeks and breast, she remained a long time, casting herself on her who would be called the mother and the consoler of the afflicted, and she learned by experience how much still remained for one that has lost all hope on earth, when he turns confidently to Heaven.

Memory brought back to her all the hours of her existence, the pure joys of childhood, the affections of youth, the first time she listened to words of love, the first time she felt remorse, and all the train of sorrows and woes that overwhelmed her after she became a wife. She recalled her last years which had been a continued scene of short stolen joys (and even these had been mingled with sorrows), of hours of bitterness and poignant remorse. And now above all, she saw, as if awaking from a lengthened dream, in whose elysium she had till that hour been wandering, that Ettore could never be torn from her heart. And when shuddering at the full view of her sins, and almost determining to follow the voice of God, which called her, and yet when it seemed impossible to her to resolve, behold the Divine Will proclaiming itself on high, and leading her, almost by force, upon the road she must struggle on by bringing her in this unlooked-for manner to find her husband. "Every doubt," she said, "is now removed. While I could believe he was no longer alive, I might perhaps excuse

myself; but can I be the wretch any longer to continue the path I have trod?"

Here a new and unforeseen obstacle presented itself.

"And when I come to stand before him and he asks me, where hast thou been till now?"

It was not easy to find the answer. Struck with this thought, it seemed to her so absolutely impossible to resolve to encounter the gaze of her judge, that she banished the idea in a single moment, and gave herself up to seek some way of escape from the dark labyrinth. But the longer she reflected the more clearly she saw that the very step to which she felt the most unconquerable repugnance, was the only one she could and ought to take, and she said to herself, "But of whom can I complain but myself? Had I but acted as I ought I should never have been brought to this bitter humiliation, and the longer it's deferred the more bitter it will be."

Ginevra's mind was vigorous; she was consequently an enemy of irresolution, and she at last firmly said: "Can I always be the victim of such remorse? Can I cast away the hope and extinguish the terrors of a future life? No! Then I will do right without thinking of the consequences. The agonies I am going to encounter will only be the expiation of my errors, and thou, Divine Mother, have pity on me in this world and in the world to come. If Grajano will not pardon me what can he do at the worst? Kill me? My immortal spirit will take its flight to God, and bear with it fruits of penitence to win mercy and pardon."

After another most fervent prayer, she ascended to the church with firm and rapid steps, as if she could thus strengthen her purpose, and went directly to her apartment, where she shut herself in to resolve upon the best mode of executing her resolution. She seated herself, as usual, at the balcony which looked towards Barletta, and began to reflect. She could not think of a better day to return to her husband, for she was certain to find him at the banquet of the castle, where she could easily go in half an hour by sea. If she waited till his return to the French camp, the difficulties would be doubled.

"Yes," she exclaimed, "all doubt is over—before to-morrow I must be with him. * * * But what shall I do to Ettore? To-day he certainly will not come—wait? I cannot leave the island and abandon him, without his knowing what has become of me. And all this to the one to whom I owe my life?" Here sprung up a thought worthy of a soul like hers. "If," said she to herself, "in leaving him, I let him know what my heart feels towards him at this moment, I know but too well he'll not have one hour more of peace while he lives. But if instead I go without telling him the reason, he will think me false, and my memory he will curse, and soon drive from his heart." She could not support the reflection, and with a sigh she exclaimed, "Oh, my sins are great, but my punishment, too, is dreadful."

Moved by that restless anxiety which attends a shock like this, she rose, wiped away the tears with the back of the hand, and began to place together the few things she wished to carry with her. In looking through the drawers, some pieces of the blue satin of Fieramosca's mantle, with the silver thread with which it was embroidered, fell under her hands. The reader may imagine the feelings that filled Ginevra's heart at the sight.

Her first impulse was to take them with her, but the next moment she laid them down saying, "No, * * every thought of him must now be blotted from my heart, and for ever. To know I have made him happy must be my only comfort here

below."

She wrote a note to the abbess, thanking her in few words for her hospitality, and recommended her friend Zoraide to her protection. She told her that a pressing motive compelled her to leave without taking a farewell, and she hoped soon to be in a situation where she could give her a more satisfactory account of her conduct. Having performed this last office, nothing more remained for her to do in the convent, but she did not wish to leave before evening. The sun was still more than an hour high, and she sat down by the balcony, and patiently waited for night to come on. But she could not have chosen a more trying way to pass those wretched moments.

She cast her eyes around the room, and the sight of the small package she had laid on the table, the sole companion of her dreary flight, gave her a sad foretaste of the sorrows prepared for her. When she looked at the bed neatly made up as it always was by one of the novices, she thought she had the evening before lain down in it for the last time, and God only knew where she would lay her head for the night approaching. Still more painful was the view from the balcony—when she gazed on the expanse of sea, that lay between her and the castle of Barletta, she thought how many times she had strained her eyes to catch the first sight of the little boat of Fieramosca moving over the dim water. And now she was herself to sail over those same waters to go—where? * * * *

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CHAPTER XIV.

WHILE Ginevra, in her anguish, was longing for and fearing the approach of night, Pietraccio, concealed in a receptacle for wood under her room, awaited her coming with suspicion and impatience, hoping that, under the cover of night, she would

show him a way of escape.

The window which let in a little light from above was on a level with the ground, and looked out on a deserted spot back of the convent overgrown with weeds and briars, where it seemed likely no person would ever go; but the brigand was startled by the sound of the steps rustling in the grass, and his fear was greatly increased when he saw a man, whom he instantly recognized, stop close to the window. It was the Conestabile of the tower. He would have tried to conceal himself behind some piles of wood; but the fear of being betrayed by stepping over the dry sticks, kept him still where he was, holding his very breath for fear. He heard the following words pass between the Conestabile and his companion:—

"Look here," began the Conestabile, "this window in the first story where you see the bird-cage and the vase of flowers. You can very well see that, even without a ladder, it's easy to climb up by the grating of the window of the ground story. Well, * * when you are up, you will find yourself in a long passage with a good many doors, but don't make a mistake—the first on the left hand is the room of Madonna; and then, there's nobody else in the stranger's apartment. An hour after dark, all the nuns are in bed. If you want to do it up right, come here about eleven, and you can carry her off, and get out a mile to sea before they know what you are about.

The dogs I'll shut up. I've given liberty to my men; and if anybody wants to find them to-night, he must hunt for them through the taverns of Barletta. So, I don't see but you have everything ready; but go careful and tell that devil, your companion, to mind what he's about; for, I'm not going, for a few florins, to be obliged to lose my commission from the abbess; so be careful, for if the expedition fails, I've got more than one way of turning the broth unto you. I shall take care it don't come on my shoulders. Plain dealing makes good friends."

Boscherino, to whom this conversation had been directed, pulled the Conestabile lightly by the end of his moustache,

and said, shaking his head :-

"To turn any hot-broth down on the head of the devil that's at the bottom of this business, you'd have to get up a little higher in the world than you ever got yet, and wield a little stronger arm. And you may thank S. Martino, that the castle of Barletta is no nearer, and that a certain person in it did n't hear your words; for, it's no surer we are in April, than that he'd make you think you was in January. Harkee, my good fellow, let this business go well or ill, the less you say about it the better it will be for you."

Martino, who had been at the banquet of Gonzales, at Barletta, and drank till his heart was bold as a lion's, courageously

replied :-

"And I repeat it to you, I don't know what fear means; and if I have stooped to do him this service, I've done it more because we soldiers are in the habit of doing such things for one another, than for those few ducats; and I'm quite certain I don't relish the idea of breaking my neck and losing my head, for a fellow I never saw. So I talk plain: go careful; for I tell you again, if you are discovered I have a way to clear myself; and whoever the man may be that has set this business agoing, when I'm safe in my tower I'll laugh at him. Well, we understand each other—addio!"

After making this speech, he walked off towards the tower, leaving Boscherino to examine the place at his leisure. He turned back upon him a single look of grimacing compassion,

and could not refrain from uttering, in a voice loud enough to be heard by Pietraccio,—

"Poor ass! Let him take care who pits himself against Cæsar Borgia: he'll find he's dealing with a man who slakes the thirst of his friends with salt. Yes, it's the Greek wine that speaks for him to-day!"

These last words, no less than the whole preceding dialogue, were heard with breathless attention, and perfectly understood, by the assassin; and they satisfied him they were plotting a commission of Valentino to ravish his protectress, and that the Duke himself was at the castle of Barletta. It may be believed, without doing injustice to Pietraccio, that the intention of defending his benefactress was not his first thought -for what did he know of gratitude ?-but the hope of frustrating this last infernal plot of the great foe of himself and his mother. Another desire, more atrocious, of being able, perhaps, to reach him in the confusion and crowd of the festa, and stab him to the heart, made his blood boil with de-moniac joy. Boscherino had hardly left the place, before he rose from his concealment; and unsheathing the keen, slim poniard given him by Don Michele, he ran the end of his finger over the edge, grinding his teeth; and then he made a pass, as though he were levelling a back stroke. His next thought was, how he could get safely to Barletta.

The Ave-Maria sounded from the convent. Half an hour after, he slowly mounted the steps, opened the door, and looking around he saw the whole place deserted; but to reach the main land, it were too hazardous an experiment to attempt to pass over the bridge under the tower; and thinking the narrow strip of water, between the island and the shore, offered a surer passage (about a hundred cubits in width), he descended the stairway to the water. Here he stripped himself; and making a bundle of his clothes, which he bound to his head, he entered the water, and in a few moments swam to the shore without being seen or heard. It was already dark; and without suspicion of danger, he wiped himself, and, dressing hastily, went on with a rapid gait to the city.

Diego Garcia di Paredes had scarcely terminated the dispute

which his astonishing display of prowess against the bull had given rise to with the French knights, when he bethought himself of an important commission entrusted to him by Gonzales, and he withdrew hastily from the amphitheatre. He had been charged to have an eye upon the arrangements of the sumptuous dinner to be given that day at the castle. The hour had almost arrived, and he was soon in the kitchen. Still boiling with the rage stirred up by the insulting words of La Motte, his appearance among the cooks and servants who were busy in the midst of smoking viands, was like that of a man not very likely to overlook any blunder or inadvertency in his inferiors.

"Well," said he, as he stopped before the door, folding his arms across his heart, "shall we be ready soon? Everything must be on the table in less than an hour."

The chief cook, a fat lusty fellow, stood by the great table in the centre of the kitchen, putting game on the spits with that crabbed look so common to his class in similar circumstances, even when everything is going on well; but he had more particular occasion just now for getting into a fret; he was out of wood, his cooking could not go on, and he feared the perilous consequence of retarding the dinner, and not being able to send it up at the hour appointed. Every one who knows the jealousy of a cook for his honor, may easily imagine his state of mind when the Spaniard addressed him the above inquiry. He would not have answered the Pope at that moment, but he knew he must give an answer to Paredes. He raised his head, and shaking the spit he held in his hand, said:

"The devil has run his horns into us, Sig. Don Diego,—
the devil from hell, * * this traitor major-domo has left me
without wood! I've sent as many of these poltroons as I
could spare to hunt up some, wherever they could lay their
hands on it; and hang 'em all, not a knave of them has shown
his face here again." And he finished his speech with the sigh,
or we should say grunt, of a man who has done his utmost.

"Wood or no wood," cried out Paredes; "Voto a Dios, by heaven, I swear if thou art not ready in time, thou majadero (scoundrel), son of a wretch"— * * on he went with a tirade

of similar threats against the cook, who could bear it no longer without retorting.

"Oh, Excellency! teach me how to roast flesh without fire." Diego was not a man to vent his rage long on a poor fellow who has right on his side, and although the cook's reply stirred him a little at first, he soon felt the truth of his remark and answered:

"And this rascally major-domo, where has he taken himself?" Without waiting for a reply, he turned on his heel and mounting to the court, cried out in a voice of thunder, "Izquierdo! Izquierdo! Maldito de Dios! * * *

Izquierdo had hastened to the nearest woodyard, and loading several mules by the help of the cook's garçons, whom he was urging up with the whip, was just entering the court, when he heard that terrible voice. But he redoubled his blows that the blame of the delay might fall, at least in part, on his poor mules, and God knows they had very little to say about it. He approached Paredes, and began to exculpate himself, but he was soon shut up.

"Quick, then—hurry—less of your jabber—down with that wood, or I'll measure some of it over your head."

To reach the kitchen of the cortile, three steps were first to be mounted, and then a dark passage conducted to a small yard, in the centre of which there was an empty square, surrounded by a wall. Descending to the bottom, the kitchen was entered by a winding staircase, and here stood Garcia stamping his feet with impatience to watch the slow and difficult process of carrying down the wood. Seeing things were making, in his opinion, little progress, he was seized with fury, and throwing his shoulder under one of the mules, he raised him from the ground, wood and all, and carried him with his legs dangling down before and behind him like a kid, and pitched him to the bottom on top of the wood, with his legs kicking in the air; and with the same fury he played the same trick with the second and third, and at the bottom of the place, which was none of the largest, could be seen a mountain of wood, snouts, ears, and legs of asses, mangled and bruised. The garçons, frightened out of their wits, sprang to their relief, and began to pick up the wood and pitch it into the kitchen. The dread of Diego Garcia now reached even the cook himself, who came to their relief, but he occasionally turned up his eyes to see if the shower of asses was likely to be renewed, that he might have time to make his escape. The fire-places were now soon filled, and the impulse given so strangely by Paredes, was so powerful, every man did the duty of three. Seeing everything was going on well, he brushed off the dust from his shoulders, and having nothing now left to scold about, he started for his house to change his dress. He found the courtyard crowded with the gay company just returned from the tournament. Gonzales, the Duke of Nemours, the ladies, and barons, had arrived just in time to see Diego Garcia backing off the last mule, and hearing the secret of the strange manœuvre. A general laugh followed as they opened a passage for the Spanish knight, and mounted to the reception rooms to wait the dining hour.

In the large audience hall of Gonzales which extended in a circuit of more than a hundred paces, adjoining his private apartments, an immense table, in the form of a horse-shoe, had been prepared, which extended around the room with accommodations for about three hundred guests. On the side farthest from the door, at the head of the table, were placed four large chairs covered with velvet, and fringed with gold, for the Duke of Nemours, Gonzales, Donna Elvira, and Vittoria Colonna. Over their heads were suspended from the wall, the banners of Spain, the ensigns of the house of Colonna, and the standards of the army, mingled with the trophies, made up of the richest and most dazzling armor, with helmets and plumes of every color, studded with a treasure of jewels. From a number of spaces left between the tables, which were long enough to admit of it, came up at equal distances, trees of orange, myrtle, and young palms, all filled with fruits; and flowers and pure cold water, conducted by delicate tubes, were gushing up among the leaves, and falling in vases of silver. where fish of a hundred colors were sporting. Around the branches of the trees little birds were fluttering, which, without its being perceived, were tied with horse-hairs, and having

been domesticated in cages, they sung merrily without being in the least intimidated by the sight or the gaiety of the banquet. An immense side-board stood near the head of the table, where the illustrious guests were seated, loaded with large vases and plates of silver, calved in arabesque figures in relievo, and directly before it sat the master of the table, on a high stool, directing by means of his ebony cane, the domestics who served the banquet.

In the centre of the open space, between the tables, were standing on the pavement, two huge urns of bronze, full of water; on which were painted suppers, by Paul Veronese, and in them were cooling flagons and pitchers of Spanish and Sicilian wine. On the two opposite sides of the room, at the height of ten cubits from the floor, were arranged the musicians. Thanks to the supervision of Diego Garcia, and the diligence of the cook, a little after mid-day the master of ceremonies was enabled to enter the hall, where the company was waiting, followed by fifty servants, dressed in yellow and red, with towels, basins, and vases, for washing the hands, and to announce that dinner was waiting. The Duke de Nemours, flushed with youth, health, and all the grace which adorns the French nation, offered his hand to Donna Elvira to conduct her to her place. Who could, at that moment, have told that youthful prince, who seemed destined for a fortunate and a glorious future, that in a few days, his eyes now flashing with vivacity, his limbs warm with the blood of youth, would be cold and still, stretched in a mean coffin in the little church Della Cerignola; and that a brief service, uttered by Gonzalo, would be the last act of affection he would have from a human

Gonzales seated himself between Vittoria Colonna and the Duke, with his daughter on the Prince's right hand, next to Ettore Fieramosca, and opened the banquet. The gallantry displayed towards Donna Elvira by the Italian knight, during the day, had been so captivating, that her fervid heart could not resist the fascination—especially when she heard his name sounded by every one with praise and affection. Seated

⁽¹⁾ The Duke de Nemours was slain in the battle Della Cerignola.

together at the table, they once more resumed their conversation with all their former earnestness; but a cloud came gradually over the brow of the Italian; his answers were less ready, and at last he seemed to become almost heedless of the conversation. Donna Elvira watched him furtively, with a slight feeling of suspicion and pique, and seeing him grow pale, with his eyes fixed on the floor, absorbed in some strange thought, she was almost inclined to believe she was herself the cause of the change. Such a fancy made her indulgent, and she also suspended conversation, and both of them remained for some time perfectly silent in the midst of the mirth and revelyy of the banquet.

But poor Elvira flattered herself too much: the cause of the agitation of Ettore Fieramosca came from a very different quarter,—it sprang from a fortuitous combination. Opposite the place where he sat, the large windows of the hall, divided by two Gothic columns, had been left open on account of the heat, and there was an unobstructed view of the whole shore of the sea, with Gargano reposing in that beautiful cerulean which bathes those mountains at mid-day, when the air is serene and limpid. In the midst of the scene, the islet and the convent of St. Ursula rose up from the sea, and so clear was the view, that on the red front of the stranger's house he saw distinctly the balcony of Ginevra under the shade of the vine leaves. On the pure coloring of this picture rose the dark figure of Grajano, who was seated directly between him and the balcony.

The contrast of the sky seemed to kindle on his burning and fiery face a still deeper red, and gave to his countenance a still more vulgar and disgusting expression. When he thought who the man was that sat before him, Fieramosca felt as though he would die of suffocation. Happily for him he knew not the agony poor Ginevra was at that very moment suffering—for at that very moment she had just heard from Gennaro that Grajano was in Barletta, and had descended to the subterranean chapel to swear to abandon those scenes for ever.

In the gaiety of the crowded banquet little observation was attracted by Ettore and Elvira. But Vittoria Colonna, who

was already filled with suspicion, had been narrowly watching their movements, and fancying some more intimate communications had passed between them, she secretly scanned every motion of the young knight and his companion, for she could not but tremble for her safety. In the mean time, the dinner was being served, with all that profusion and variety which the usage of those times required. If the cooking art is difficult in our times, it was, perhaps, doubly so then—for a cook at that period was obliged, on such an occasion as this, to serve up scores of dishes, of which we moderns have not even an idea. Every dish was expected not only to please the

palate, but delight the eye of the gourmand.

Before Gonzales was an immense peacock, which still retained all its plumes and feathers in so perfect a state, and the difficulty of cooking it without injuring its plumage had been so fortunately overcome, it seemed to be still alive. It was surrounded, on the same dish, by a large number of smaller birds, prepared in the same manner, all filled with spices and perfumes. At equal distances rose up enormous pasties, two arms in height; and, at the appointed time, at a sign from the master of ceremonies, the covers rose, without being touched, and from each one came up a dwarf, fantastically dressed, who distributed the dish, with silver spoons, among the guests. Some of the dessert and fruit dishes were constructed in the form of little mountains, on which were growing plants, loaded with candied fruits-others in the form of little lakes of distilled water, in which decorated cakes of sugar, laden with confectionery, were lightly floating, and others, still, represented Alpine mountains, with volcanic peaks, sending forth clouds of the most delicious perfumes. When opened, they were found to contain chestnuts and other fruits, cooked slowly by flames of spirits of wine. Among the profusion of game was a small wild boar, with his skin still apparently untouched, assaulted by the spears of the hunters (of pastry)—but on cutting it open, it was found to be perfectly cooked, and even the hunters themselves were served up with their victims. Towards the close of the banquet, four pages, dressed in crimson and gold plaid, came riding into the hall on four white horses, bearing an enormous dish, on which lay a thunny three arms in length, which they deposited before Gonzales, while the whole crowd were filled with admiration at the immense size of the fish, and its superb ornaments; on its back was the figure of a naked youth, with his lyre, which represented Arion, of Metimna. Gonzales turned to the Duke de Nemours, and presenting him a knife, requested him to open the fish's mouth.

The Duke complied with his request, and a flock of doves came out from their prison and flew gaily round the hall. This last device was received at first with astonishment and delight by all the guests. The doves alighted in different parts of the hall, and there were seen suspended from each one's neck jewels and ribbons, on which were inscribed names. The banquet now became aware the Spanish Captain had chosen this delicate manner of presenting gifts to his guests, and a beautiful scene of excitement and confusion followed, when the doves were taken and carried one after another to the fortunate ones for whom they were destined.

Even Fanfulla thought to try his hand with the rest. He caught a glance of the inscription of one of the doves flying over his head, and seeing it bore the name of Donna Elvira, whose beauty had completely fascinated him, he determined to be the one to present to her the gift. He gave chase to the bird, and being more spry than the rest he soon entrapped it, and making his way through the crowd he dropped on one knee before her and presented her the dove, which bore on its neck a clasp of the largest and most brilliant diamonds.

Donna Elvira received the dove with the most gracious recognition, and holding it to her cheeks to caress it, the frightened bird struggled and flapped its wings, dishevelling the blond locks on the brow of the maiden which tinged with a delicate carnation. While she was endeavoring to detach the jewels from the dove's neck, Fanfulla said as he rose, "I do not believe there are more beautiful diamonds than these in the world, but, lady, it would not be treating them fairly to compare them with your eyes!"

A smile of complacency recompensed the courteous words

of Fanfulla. Some of my readers, familiar with the delicacy with which modern civilisation has invested all social relations, may be inclined perhaps to esteem this compliment too gross, but we pray them to remember that for a soldier of the fifteenth century, with as mad a brain as this young knight from Lodi, it ought to be considered delicate even to excess, and he was better absolved by Donna Elvira than all my words could absolve him, for the daughter of Gonzales esteemed it a compliment worthy of a cavalier.

But Fanfulla could not behold her without envy and a tinge of ill-will as she turned to Fieramosca, after examining and praising the jewel, and presented him a gold pin with a request that he would fasten it to her breast. Vittoria Colonna who stood near by, advanced gravely to perform this office herself. Ettore, conscious of the inconsiderateness of Elvira's request, was going to deliver up the clasp, but Elvira, capricious and self-willed, like all children who are brought up by too indulgent parents, stepped between them, and with a smile she put on to conceal her chagrin, exclaimed to Fieramosca:

"What! are you so used to managing the sword, that you scorn to hold a pin in your hand for a single moment?" The Italian could not but obey, and Vittoria Colonna turned away, with an expression on her beautiful but haughty countenance, which showed but too plainly how she would have scorned to stoop to such coquetry.

Fanfulla stood still a moment, gazing at Fieramosca.— "Lucky fellow thou art," said he; "others sow, but thou reapest," and off he went, whistling, as though he had been alone

in the street, and not in the midst of a banquet.

But the gifts of Gonzales were not destined for the ladies alone—he had not forgotten his French guests, and many a rich ring, and work of gold to adorn the head dress, with a profusion of other presents, fell to the lot of the Duke of Nemours and his barons. Nor was the sumptuous display of the Spanish Captain, at this banquet, without an object—he wished to show the French that he was not only abundantly supplied with every provision for his soldiers, but the means of offering magnificent entertainments for his guests.

The doves were at last all taken, and each one resumed his place, to receive the toasts which were now to be drank. The Duke de Nemours, following the custom of France, rose to his feet, and taking a goblet, turned to Donna Elvira, and prayed her ever to consider him her cavalier, saving his allegiance to the Most Christian King. The maiden accepted his gallant homage in a courteous reply; a long succession of toasts followed. At last Gonzales rose, and, followed by his guests, walked out on a balcony that commanded a view of the sea, where the hours still left to complete the day were passed in conversation. Donna Elvira and Fieramosca passed most of these hours together: the Spanish maiden seemed unable to tear herself from his company, and when he turned to mingle with the guests, or seek some corner alone, she was soon again by his side. Too sensitive not to be conscious of this preference. Ettore was too full of honor to desire to inflame it, for he knew it could not be happily consummated. But his gallant nature, and the commands of Gonzales, could not allow him to be guilty of any violation of courtesy. Not a few eyed them closely, and became merry at their expense. Fanfulla, who was far from having forgotten the affair of the dove, was chagrined to see his companion basking in her smiles, and the first opportunity he had of saying to him a word, he whispered in his ear, with half a smile and half a frown, "But thou wilt pay me for this some day."

CHAPTER XV.

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In the grand hall of the ground-floor, which, in an ancient castles, formed the rendezvous of the men-at-arms, a theatre had been erected similar in form to those of our times, saving that the curtain, instead of rising, used to fall in the place now appropriated to the orchestra. From a neighboring city on the sea coast, a company of travelling comedians, who had passed the Carnival in Venice, and wandered from city to city, representing dramas and comedies, on their way to Naples, for the festivals of St. Gennaro, or to Palermo, for S. Rosalia, had now been called to Barletta to hold themselves in readiness for this gala-day of Gonzales.

Being summoned before so select an audience, they had made special preparations to give a grand performance. It was hardly dark before the spectators were all in their boxes, and the order was given to commence. An immense piece of linencloth which served for a curtain, was lowered, and a stage appeared, on one side of which was seen a gorgeous portico of statues and columns. It was the entrance of a Royal Palace, and over the door was an inscription in letters of gold—"Land of Babilonia."

Under the portico, seated on a throne, and surrounded by his court, was a King with a sceptre of gold in his hand, dressed in gorgeous oriental robes, with a magnificent turban covered with gems, and surmounted by a crown. In the midst of the stage could be seen the shore of the sea, with a lofty mountain stretching away on the side, covered with trees and rocks, in the midst of which, from a deep cavern, came out an immense dragon, casting occasional glances upon the golden fleece of a ram suspended from a neighboring tree.

Near the King was seated, on a lower throne, a majestic, graceful, and beautiful woman robed in crimson satin, with a train two yards in length, and a cap of black velvet in the French fashion. She had a falchion at her side instead of a scimitar, and a book and a wand in her hand—it was Medea. In a few moments a vessel came to the shore, from which a number of young men in the dress of soldiers landed. One of them was of great beauty, all covered with mail except the head; and two young Moors carried his helmet and shield—it was Jason. Advancing forward, he bowed a reverence to the King, and began an address in lines of eight feet, which grated not unlikely with some harshness on the ears of Vittoria Colonna, as perhaps they would on the ears of our readers. They began thus:—

Di Christianita venemmo,
Argonauti se chiameno,
Al Soldan de Babellona,
Che Dio salvi sua corona.

From Christendom we came,
Argonauts is our name,
And may God save the crown
Of the Sultan of Babylon.

Continuing in this measure, he said they had come to carry off with them the Fleece of Gold. After consulting with his court and his daughter, Œta replied, manifesting his satisfaction, and left Jason, the speaker, alone with his daughter.

He immediately began to make love to the lady; and praying for her help, promised to conduct her to Christendom, where he would wed her, and make her a queen. Medea lent a willing ear to his flatteries, and taught him certain spells to charm the dragon, charging him, above all things, if he wished to practice them with success, that he should say nothing about saints, or make the sign of the cross, which would soon destroy their power. When she left him, Jason turned to his companions, and declared it would be unworthy of a brave cavalier to resort to incantations to overcome the dragon, and he was determined to conquer him by arms. He drew his

sword, and covering himself with the shield one of his attendants presented to him, while the other buckled on his helmet, he assaulted the dragon. But the monster rushed forth from the cavern, vomiting fire, and made so brave a defence, that, after a short battle, Jason was compelled to renounce the undertaking. His companions then exhorted him, with earnest entreaties, to resort to the incantations; and yielding to their prayers, he succeeded in charming the dragon and stealing the golden fleece.

Medea now returned, and besought them to carry her away with them; and suddenly the sound of trumpets, and cymbals, and flutes, and other Moorish instruments, was heard approaching. Shortly after, a youth, mounted on a horse, came out, in a Saracen dress, to challenge Jason, who accepted the battle, and with a few blows brought him to the ground. While he was embarking with his company in the ship, Œta came up with his court: seeing his daughter flying, and his son Absirto lying dead on the ground, he commanded his attendants to oppose the departure of the Argonauts. Medea then began her incantations—the air grew dark—a host of men, strangely dressed, looking like demons, appeared, running about with torches, and finished by setting fire to Babylon, and carrying off with them the king and all his court. The Argonauts, in the meantime, were allowed, without opposition, to sail off on their voyage. Thus ended the drama.

Those of our readers who vaunt themselves so much on the exquisiteness of our modern theatres, should consider that the talent which, in certain plays of the present day, draws down thunders of applause, and which consists in so arranging matters that the play always ends with some conflagration or ruin, with Olympus or Tartarus, is no new discovery of our century, but served the scenes, and was appreciated by "the public," of 1500.

The company for whose benefit this spectacle had been prepared, although composed in part of persons not destitute of culture, remained pleased, or, at least, appeared so; and in truth, for comedians of their class, and for the place where they played, they even did better than could have been ex-

pected. But another portion of the guests of the banquet, whose inferior condition precluded them from mingling with noble cavaliers, were enjoying, in the meantime, another similar spectacle, prepared for them in the courtyard; and their shouts and acclamations certainly gave evidence of a warmer approbation.

Several Spanish soldiers had demanded, and obtained, permission to recite one of the national comedies. In an angle of the court, a place had been prepared with tables and a curtain in the form of a theatre: and for several days previous, the actors had gone for rehearsal, that each one might learn perfectly his part. They had chosen a comedy, widely popular in Spain, entitled "Las Mocedades del Cid"—which literally signifies, the childhood of Cid; or, more properly speaking, his youth—and after this, if the time would allow, they were to

recite a saynetes, or petite pièce, as the French say.

Just as the dramatic action we have described began in the castle, this second theatre was also thrown open to a crowded audience, composed of capi-squadra, officers, soldiers, citizens by scores, shop-keepers, and a host of the common people. The aristocracy of this assemblage were very comfortably seated near the stage, and spreading off on all sides from this centre, the quality of the spectators deteriorated, till, on the outer extremities, there were seen none but loafers and sweeps. The entrance of the castle was open to all; and, consequently, the crowd was enormous: and if, on account of their different positions, all could not equally enjoy the play, those who were most distant comforted themselves by groans, hisses, and whistlings, all of which were received by those near the stage with evident marks of disapprobation, and the launch of an occasional Zitto (silence), first from one side and then from the other, which, so far from restraining the noise, made the disturbance still more boisterous.

In the midst of this rabble, intent on their own amusement, there was one man wandering about, who, notwithstanding his squalid and abject appearance, had the countenance and bearing of one who could not be confounded with the mass around him, and who showed by his restless and anxious ap-

pearance, that he had come to the place from a very different motive than amusement. This man was Pietraccio, and he had got thus far, without obstacle, on his way to assassinate Cæsar Borgia, and give warning to Fieramosca of the peril of Ginevra. Finding himself thrown into the midst of such a scene of confusion, he was not a little embarrassed; for he was aware he had almost insuperable difficulties to overcome, before he could find the persons he sought. The reader may, perhaps, feel some surprise that an assassin, who had a price fixed upon his head, should dare to enter the city, and run the hazard of being taken; and without doubt, in our times, when society is subject to a different organization, it would have been an act of fool-hardy rashness. But the men of that age had not, like us, laws and officers of police, vigilant only to guard the public tranquillity; and as the horror excited by the assassination of the Podestà had somewhat died away, Pietraccio could, particularly in the night, visit Barletta with as much safety as he ranged his wild thickets on the mountains. But however hazardous may have been the movement, he had too many times extricated himself from danger, and was too charged with an infernal thirst for revenge, not to find a way to conquer every obstacle. Let us leave him to the execution of his purpose, while we return once more to the principal actors in our history.

It was nearly two hours after dark when the amusements of the theatre were brought to a close, and the court of Gonzales returned again to the banquet hall. It had been entirely transformed and decorated for the ball, brilliantly illuminated by an infinite number of candelabras hung on every side, with a magnificent chandelier glittering in the centre. The orchestra still occupied the same tier of boxes as at dinner, raised nearly two-thirds of the distance from the pavement to the cornice, and the saloon had been cleared of all persons of no particular account, with the exception of the musicians, they being considered spectators of a scene in which they could not mingle.

Gonzales with his noble guests seated himself on a lounge, beneath the banners suspended from the wall, and when the

hall was filled the Duke de Nemours led off Donna Elvira in the

dance. When they had left the floor, and the maiden was again seated, Fieramosca, who did not, even on this occasion, wish to forget his wonted courtesy, came forward and offered her his hand, craving a pardon beforehand for his boldness. She recognized his offer with marked gladness-they were joined by a succession of other couples, and among the rest Fanfulla, who not being able to win the hand of Donna Elvira, made a choice of the most beautiful he could find among the Barletta ladies present, and managed matters so that he should in the contradanza be the vis-à-vis of Ettore and his partner. The pains he took in the turnings of the dance to watch every movement, and hear every word of Donna Elvira, was none too agreeable to that lady. The tremulous glances of the Spanish maiden showed him how grateful to her was the society of her partner, and the sound of the instruments, the movement, the frequent pressure of the hand, and that liberty which the dance gives to persons who in other circumstances would approach each other with greater caution, all combined to inflame the soul of the daughter of Gonzales, with an enthusiasm of excitement she could hardly control. Ettore and Fanfulla were both equally conscious of it; it excited the surprise of the one, and the indignation of the other, who was continually harassing Fieramosca with hints and winks. But Ettore, whose nature easily revolted from such jests, maintained a stern and almost melancholy countenance, which the damsel interpreted in her own way; but unfortunately too far from the truth.

At last, Donna Elvira, with that heedless imprudence all her own, seizing a moment when she held Ettore's hand, whispered in his ear—"When this dance is over, I'm going to walk on the terrace, which overlooks the sea—come with me, I wish to speak to you."

Thunderstruck with these words which showed him he was to be drawn unwillingly into a serious intrigue, Fieramosca nodded assent with a slight change of countenance without giving any other reply. But either Donna Elvira had not used sufficient precaution in lowering her voice, or Fanfulla's ears were too wide open, for the fact was he had heard those ill-timed words, and cursing in his inmost heart the good fortune

of Fieramosca, he muttered through his teeth, "Is there no way of making this little fairy pay dear for these words?"

Ettore was distracted at the same time by a thousand harassing thoughts, but the idea never crossed his mind for a moment of taking advantage of the flattering words of the Spanish maiden. For first of all the image of Ginevra was too deeply enshrined in his heart, and even without this motive he had too much sense to attempt an intrigue with the daughter of Gonzales; and she herself, with all the coquettry of her nature, could never have made a conquest of Ettore's heart, for he was far from being one of that class of men who are on the alert for every opportunity that offers. Neither could he without pain have been esteemed discourteous, illbred, or perhaps worse, for among the contradictions of human nature there happens to be that of calling a man a fool and a simpleton for not doing the very things which are esteemed base and contemptible. During the rest of the dance he tried to imagine some way to escape, as the saying goes, both the fox and the geese, and after shifting his project a score of times he at last resolved, seeing the moment was approaching, resolutely to incur any risk before being guilty of a wrong to Ginevra. He could not but remember that while he was mingling in the festivities of this gay assembly, she was shut up in a miserable cloister in the midst of the sea, abandoned by all the world, and thinking, not unlikely, of him too, and he condemned himself for having even for a single moment admitted anything on earth but her image to absorb his soul. He had therefore hardly finished dancing with Elvira when he determined to leave the place, and offering as an excuse one of those bad sensations in the head, which served in the sixteenth, as they now serve in the nineteenth, century in so many occasions, he left the hall and went to his own house.

The young men who had taken part in this contradanza, in order to relieve themselves from all encumbrance, and such moreover was the custom, had left the mantles they wore on the left shoulder in an adjoining chamber, remaining in their doublets and breeches, for the most part of white satin

Fanfulla and Ettore were dressed in this color, and were so nearly alike in stature and under-dress that they would have been distinguished only by their mantles. Fieramosca's was of blue, embroidered in silver, Fanfulla's was of vermillion.

Ettore found Diego Garcia, and asked him to render as his apology to Gonzales and his daughter that a violent head-ache obliged him to leave, and he went immediately to the room where he had left his mantle. Just as he was passing the threshold at a moment the crowd was divided, which left no one near him, he felt a light tap on his shoulder like the fall of something from above, and looking at his feet where it had fallen, he saw a note which contained something heavy. He looked up to the box from which it appeared to have fallen, and seeing no one looking at him he stooped, and picking it up found there was a small stone folded in the paper only to give it weight to direct its course where it was thrown. following sentence was coarsely and almost illegibly written: "Madonna Ginevra is going to be stolen away from St. Ursula at the command of the Duke of Valentino, three hours after night-fall. He who sends you this warning waits for you with three companions at the great gate of the castle, and will bear a Moorish lance in his hand."

A cold chill struck to the very marrow of Fieramosca's bones, and it was doubled when he recollected that two hours and a half had already some time before sounded from the clock on the tower. There was not a moment to lose. Pale as a man who had received his death wound, and is taking his last steps ready to fall for ever, he darted through the door like a flash and rushed precipitately down the great stair-way without mantle or cap, alarming all he passed, and running with all his speed he reached the spot marked out under such terrible excitement, he was forced to support himself from falling by seizing hold of the large iron ring hung to the gate. The arch of the entrance was pitch dark. Almost suffocated with running and with agony, he braced himself up against the wall till the man with the lance came up.

Fieramosca's departure from the ball, so furious and so changed in his aspect, excited general observation, but when

the secret was explained by Garcia, the crowd thought not of following him. But the fears of Inigo and Brancaleone, who loved him better than any, were not to be so easily dispelled. They followed immediately, and although they could not catch up with him, they still kept their eye on him and reached the gate soon after himself.

When they found Fieramosca he was dragging Pietraccio away with him, saying: "Let us go then quick, quick!" Seeing his companions he exclaimed with great agitation, "If you are my friends come to my aid against the traitor Valentino. We'll take a boat, we are seven men, and we'll soon be at St. Ursula." Brancaleone cast an eye from himself to his companions and replied, "And where are our arms?" In fact not one of them had brought down a sword. Fieramosca went almost raving, he stamped his feet on the ground, tore his hair from his head, and seemed ready to lose his senses. But Brancaleone, who in a crisis never lacked words or expedients, continued:

"Go, Ettore, to the sea with your men, get a boat ready with the oars, and wait for us. Inigo, you come with me," and the two vanished, while Fieramosca cried out after them, "Make haste, make haste, it only lacks a few moments of the time;" and although his friends neither understood the force of these words, nor the motive for such haste, they knew no time should be lost, and entering the house of the Colonni, they rushed to the hall on the ground floor where the armor was kept, and seizing several breast-plates, visors, and swords, they rushed back again with the same speed to their companions, whom they found already in the boat. They flung in their armor and jumped in themselves, leaving Inigo, who was the last, to shove off. They took their seats, and seizing up their oars they made them bend under their hurried desperate strokes.

In directing their course towards the convent they were obliged to pass under the clock-tower of the castle. As they swept by they could distinctly hear the rumbling which the machinery makes a few seconds before striking the hour. Poor Ettore's head and shoulders fell instantly to his breast as though

he felt the tower itself were tumbling down upon his head. In a few seconds the fatal hour struck, and prolonged its sounds over the sea, till they reached the shore and sent back their fatal echo.

But before we see the end of this desperate movement, we must return for a short interval to the ball-room. Fanfulla, to whom chance, or his own subtlety, had discovered the secret of Donna Elvira, had determined within himself to reap some advantage from it, but he was at a loss how to execute his purpose. But when he saw his preferred rival rush from the room without cap or mantle, a wild fancy sprang up in his brain, and being a man who never hesitated a moment when a mad caprice was to be indulged, he hurried on still more recklessly to its gratification.

He had kept his eye fixed on the daughter of Gonzales, and seeing her, when the dance was finished, cross over to go into the balcony, he knew she was not aware of his departure. He went hastily to the apartment where the mantles were left. He found that all had been taken but his own and Fieramosca's, with his cap of black velvet ornamented with several bending plumes. He put it on his head in such a manner, that the plumes partially concealed his face; over his shoulders he flung the blue mantle, and without gazing him full in the face, every one would have taken him for Fieramosca.

Thus disguised, he made his way through the crowd slily to the balcony, where there were no lights, and the darkness was hardly dissipated by the reflection of those that shone so brilliantly within. A number of boxes of lemon trees placed around a fountain which sent up fresh water, so completely shaded the spot, it was easy to prevent one's self from being seen by those who came out of the hall. When he stepped upon the balcony, there happened to be no one in sight. He advanced cautiously, and saw Donna Elvira seated near the parapet, over the sea, with an elbow resting on the iron railing, supporting her head with her hand, gazing steadily up into the sky.

The moon was obscured at that moment by some fleecy clouds drifting before the wind. Fanfulla knew if he allowed

this opportunity to pass, he would almost certainly be recognized when these clouds had passed, and tripping lightly forward on his toes he approached Donna Elvira, who was unconscious of his approach till he was already by her side. As she turned her head, Fanfulla dropped his own with grace and address, and reverently falling upon one knee at her feet, seized her hand, and pressed it to his lips. He conducted matters, in fact, so adroitly, and succeeded so entirely in concealing his face, that the daughter of Gonzales had not the faintest doubt Fieramosca was at her feet. She feigned to wish to withdraw her hand, but according to the usage of all times, it was with pardonable force retained. Although her character was capricious, light and self-willed, we cannot but suppose that on finding herself in so close an intercourse with a young knight, she felt stung by a feeling of remorse, and trembled with the fear of being surprised by her father, or perhaps still worse, by her severe friend.

A stronger gust of wind swept off from the moon the veil which had covered it; its full beams flooded the spot where they were, and the brilliant dresses they wore with limpid light. They might have been unconscious of it, perhaps, themselves, but a piercing scream of a female voice coming up from the terrace, a few feet above the sea, startled them both, and knowing it must have been heard by other persons, who might come out on the balcony, they hastily returned by different passages to the hall; where the few who had heard the scream had as soon forgotten it, amidst the general festivity. The first cry had, however, been succeeded by a second, more feeble, which expired on the lips of the person who uttered it, and no other sound was heard but the dead fall of a human body into the bottom of a boat. But the balcony was deserted. The halls of the castle were gay with festivity, and no one troubled himself to know who the wretched being was who called for help.

While these circumstances were transpiring in the castle, the little skiff, which bore Fieramosca and his companions, pulled by seven strong men, flew over the waters towards the convent, leaving a long white streak of foam in its wake.

Brancaleone — perceiving that Fieramosca thought only of trying the last strength of his arms, as he bent over his oar—exclaimed in a resolute tone, "Come, rouse thee, Ettore; I know not where thou art taking us, but this is certainly no child's play; at any rate, if anything is to be done, we shall be poor helpers while these coats of mail lie in the bottom of the boat."

The whole company saw the force of these words, and began to arm themselves rapidly, prudently following each other, that only one might abandon his oar at the same time. Once buckled on their swords, and their heads covered with light steel helmets, they bent over their oars with still more desperate strokes, sharply watching the sea in all directions, to catch a glimpse of their adversaries.

In the meantime, while Ettore was telling them in broken words, why he had asked their succor, he saw a boat at a short distance, and they pulled towards it; but they found, as they approached, it was rowed only by a single person, who was slowly moving on towards Barletta.

But no time was to be lost, and they again turned on their course to the convent, without having been able clearly to discern the figure of this single oarsman. Inigo advised the rest to overhaul the boat, with the hope of getting some information, but Ettore would not consent. The appointed hour was already passed, and they could hardly hope, as it was, to reach their destination in time. And yet, had he followed the counsel of Inigo, how many curses he would have escaped!

The convent of St. Ursula grew gradually more and more distinct. Ettore kept his eyes fixed intently on its outline, but he could discover no light at any of the windows. At a distance of two shots of an arquebus, on the left, a long, low, bark shot forth like a swallow over the sea. In a single breath, Ettore, Inigo, and Brancaleone, exclaimed in a suppressed voice, "There they are;" and turning the prow in that direction, redoubled their strokes. The other skiff, perceiving their design, put all speed to escape them: but the desperation of the pursuers seemed now to be increased three-fold—the space between the two boats was diminishing—already they could

hear what each other said; and Fieramosca, rising as far as he could, without dropping his oar, saw a woman stretched on the poop, held down by two men.

"Traitors," he cried out, with a voice which sent back an

echo from the walls of the convent.

"On, on; pull, pull away," they all cried out together, as they shut their teeth and heaved their desperate strokes, that brought their bow almost up to the stern of their enemies.

Swift as lightning, Ettore flung down his oar, and leaped, sword in hand into the midst of his foes, who had armed themselves to the teeth.

The push he gave his own boat, as he shrang forward, sent it astern, and he stood alone in the midst of his enemies, where blows fell upon his breast and head, that cleft his helmet and corselet. But his companions saw his danger, and in a moment were at his side. Pietraccio was the second to leap forward; but he had hardly reached the spot where he believed he should find Valentino, when the stroke of an oar fell on his head, and laid him senseless in the bottom of the boat. Side by side stood Ettore, Inigo, and Brancaleone, fighting desperately, blade to blade, and well they knew how to use them; but they could neither overcome their enemies, nor be overcome by them, for they kept them hemmed in the stern of the boat. Each struck and parried well-dealt blows with incredible swiftness; and in the confusion the boat whirled and dipped, every moment in danger of being overturned.

Pietraccio's companions had not been able to come forward to the struggle—for the boat was so narrow more than three men could not fight abreast—but they were not useless. They seized the female from the poop, and carried her, by main force, to their own boat. When the three combatants saw the conquest had been made, they followed Brancaleone's advice, given in a suppressed voice, and retreating backwards, and leaping by a single spring into their own boat, they allowed their enemies to draw off. Ettore would not have so easily given over the struggle, had he seen Cæsar Borgia among his foes; but he was not there. He had only exposed the lives of the villains in his service, and Ettore cared not to imbrue his

hands in the ruffians' blood. Besides, Ginevra was rescuedso thought he-and he felt it would be better to think only of her safety. But Don Michele burned with rage to see himself robbed of all the fruit of his intrigues, and cursed himself for not having, in the beginning of the struggle, thought of securing the female. The thing, however, was done, and he knew too well the folly of attempting to recover her from the hands of the desperate men who had carried her off. But this bold assassin of Cæsar Borgia had not suffered defeat, without some vengeance. While the three knights were drawing back to leap into their own boat, he pressed forward, grasping his sword in his right hand and his dagger in the left, and gave several thrusts at Fieramosca, who was nearer to him than the rest, and he succeeded, as he sprang into his skiff, in wounding him lightly in the neck: but in the heat of the moment Ettore was unconscious of the wound.

Thus separated, one party turned towards Barletta, and the other rowed back towards the convent. The female was enveloped in a sheet. Still anxious for the result, Fieramosca seated her as well as he could, and removed the cloth that covered her. Instead of Ginevra, he found Zoraide, who had fainted away. At any other moment he would have blessed God for her liberation; but now he felt that nothing was done, when he had thought everything consummated.

What had become of Ginevra? And how came Zoraide there? He sighed deeply, beating his brow with his clenched hand in the wildest agony, and astonishing his companions, who were wholly unconscious of the mistake. They soon reached the island, and Ettore dashed up the stairs, and in a moment was in the room of Ginevra. He found it open and empty, and the island and the convent in profound stillness. As he came out of the room to seek elsewhere for something that would relieve his anxiety, his companions arrived in the gallery, bearing Zoraide, who had recovered her senses, but could give no other reply to his hasty interrogations, than that, about nine o'clock, she had been waked by the noise of several men, who entered her room, rolled her up in a sheet, and carried her to a boat. She could remember nothing more. Of Ginevra

she knew nothing; she had not seen her since noon the day before. Observing she was thoughtful and melancholy, she had avoided disturbing her; and at her usual hour of retiring, she had gone to her chamber without seeking for her.

Ettore listened, standing, to this relation with his eyes fixed on Zoraide, and when she finished, his countenance underwent a gradual change, till his cheeks were as pallid as the dead. At last he was obliged to sit down, and in trying to raise himself up, his knees gave way. One of the company had in the meanwhile gone to knock at the door of the cloister, and, waking Gennaro, returned with a light. Inigo and Brancaleone were amazed at the frightful change that had come over Fieramosca in a few moments, and they attributed it to fatigue and anguish of mind. A second time he tried to stand up, but his strength had all vanished, and falling down once more with his head thrown back over the chair, he said with an altered voice, "Brancaleone! Inigo! I never felt in all my life as I feel now-time is flying, and what will become of Ginevra? If I could only have my strength for one hour, * * * and then be crushed to powder * *. I implore you, my dearest companions, wait not a moment, * go, go-* * but l can't tell you where, * * but go back to Barletta, * and find her * liberate her * find her at all hazards *. Oh, eternal God! cannot I take a step for her!" and he tried, but it was impossible. But again he implored his friends still more earnestly to leave him, and run to Ginevra's help, and so wild did his entreaties become, that his companions, who knew they had no time to waste in taking counsel, promised to return quickly to him with some intelligence, and then left his side. They were soon in their boat, rowing back with all speed to the city.

Zoraide, anxious in the meantime for her liberator, endeavored by words and acts of tenderness to administer him some relief. She removed his helmet, and unbuckled his coat of mail. In wiping off the cold sweat that stood on his brow and neck, she discovered a wound which had been made under the collar of his shirt.

"Oh, heavens! thou art wounded," she cried, and drying quickly the blood which came out and hid the wound, she saw

slight it was, she continued, "Oh! it is nothing! it's only a scratch." But when she examined more carefully by the lamp, she saw a red purple around every part of the wound, and gazing on Fieramosca's face, she noticed a livid hue around his eyes and lips; his hands and ears were of the color of the box-wood, rigid and cold. Born and nurtured in the east, she was familiar with the treatment of wounds of every species, and she instantly suspected the dagger had been poisoned. She besought Ettore to lie down on the bed, and putting forth all her strength, she enabled him to reach it; she felt of the pulse, and found its beat slow and confined.

But the corporeal anguish Fieramosca suffered, was nothing compared with the harrowing reflections that crowded on his brain, in multiplied new forms every moment. The wild scenes of that evening, and the peril of Ginevra, and thus far left him no time to think of anything but her—like the condemned criminal who can sleep his hour, even on the last night of his life, and wakes to feel, for the first time, that he must die in the same manner. Fieramosca had hardly recovered from the first stupifying shock, when the recollection of the challenge rushed vividly on him, and the oath he had sworn, not to expose himself to a wound before the day of combat.

He thought of the shame he should bring upon his country if he could not take the field, and the deep pain he would feel in not being able to draw the sword with his companions on the field, of the scorn the French would heap on his name, and the soiled honor of Italy; and these wild images all rushing over his brain together, wrung his heart with such torture that every muscle in his body quivered with convulsion, and a sigh so bitter escaped from his breast, that Zoraide sprang to her feet in alarm, begging him to tell the cause—Ettore exclaimed—

"I am disgraced for ever! The challenge, Zoraide, the challenge (beating his forehead with his fist), it's but a few days, and I feel so prostrate I could not recover my strength in

a month! Oh! God, for what deadly sin am I doomed to this dreadful misfortune?"

The maiden knew not what answer to make to these words, but not unlikely she thought less of the battle at that moment than the present danger of him who reigned in her heart—a danger her experience taught her was becoming every moment more critical. This in tant of paroxysm was quickly succeeded by a kind of death-like lethargy. He had sunk down with his head upon his arm more deadly pale than before—the violent beating of the veins betokened convulsions, and when Zoraide again looked at the wound, the purple ring around it had increased the width of a finger.

But Ettore could not restrain his anguish. "Yes, here's the sample of Italian honor! This is the glowing end of the battle, the courage and the vaunting, we've been guilty of it. But yet, in the face of God himself, where is my crime? How could I have done otherwise?"

But these reflections were far from affording him consolation, and he thought—

"And to whom will I tell the history of all this? To whom shall I give my reasons? And even when they are all told, will not my enemies feign not to believe it, and say:—'Ah! these are the subterfuges of the man who was afraid to meet us.'"

While these rending reflections were whirling through his brain, the fatal poison, but too well conducted by the dagger of Don Michele, was winding, serpent-like, through his veins, and creeping up to the head. By degrees his sight became dim, and his reason began to waver in the wild beatings of his temples, which first made everything around him tremble, then flit on his vision with fitful dazzling gleams. Zoraide stood by his side, all trembling with alarm; and Ettore held his wild eyes full on her face. His brain was turned—under the feeble light of the small lamp, which was dying away, he saw the features of the maiden change, first into those of La Motte. The phantom appeared with the corners of the mouth drawn down into a bitter, frightful laugh; and then its lips grew large and purple, and it changed into the form of Grajano d'Asti, which gradually

increased as it shot down on him the same demoniac smile, till it wore the ghastly face of Valentino. And thus, these phantoms flitted by, blending with each other, like a shifting phantasmagoria, of the very beings, who, at that dreadful hour, were most vividly painted on his fancy. And among the rest, flitted by the image of Ginevra, to whom he called by name, with burning words of love, "Leave me to die thus—I who love thee so—to leave me in this deep abyss—Oh! tear away from me these infernal visions that stare me in the face;" and many other wild words, at the close of which, all these phantoms came rushing on him together, forming first a lurid group, burning and tremulous, like prolonged flashes of lightning, which grew fainter and fainter till it died away, and every faculty of the young sufferer was utterly suspended.

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CHAPTER XVI.

To conduct, side by side, the relation of the numerous incidents which befell, on that eventful evening, the various actors of this story, we have been obliged to leave the reader in suspense in regard to each one. And although this may be the common custom of narrators, yet we believe it cannot be a source of pleasure to the reader, if the book he hold in his hand is of a nature to inspire any desire to know the end. We shall offer no apology to our reader for having adopted this course, which the nature of the tale rendered unavoidable; and such an excuse would be an act of vanity that might provoke a smile at our expense; and we are aware that what would be modesty in some, is quite a different thing in others.

But however all this may be, we are obliged to abandon even Fieramosca, for a short time, and return to the castle, to find Cæsar Borgia, whom we left in the small basement-rooms that looked out on the sea.

The first of the two plots which had led him to the camp of the Spanish army, had, in spite of his subtlety, vanished in smoke; for he had been unable to inspire sufficient confidence in Gonzales to win him over to the League, or even to gain his protection. The Spaniard who had kept his faith with him, as far as his concealment was concerned, had, nevertheless, declined his offers in the best manner he could, treating him with that honor which, however little merited by his known character, was still due to his rank. During the seven or eight days these negotiations and intrigues were in operation, he kept himself almost continually sout up in his rooms that no trace might be gained of him. And when at long intervals he went out to take the air, he chose the night time, with a mask

over his face, a resort of great men in that century, often made use of to cover, with the veil of secrecy, deeds which merited little praise. But as we remarked, besides these political intrigues, he was laying plots for the ruin of her who had been bold enough to show him her contempt; and these plots were, by means of the subtlety of Don Michele, to be brought that night to their consummation.

It may be difficult to some to conceive how this abandoned villain, plunged in the deepest of crimes, could value so much the possession of a single female, and so untiringly follow up her track. And, indeed, it would be a sad mistake to suppose that love, even the most sensual, guided the desires of Valentino. But Ginevra has repulsed him—and repulsed him in a way that showed her horror and her scorn—she still lived, as he believed, happy with another—he felt he had been frustrated and scorned—and who, in the wide universe, could boast of having held Cæsar Borgia at bay?

Of all the beautiful women he had seen, he had left them guilty or dishonored, and he had encountered many that were pure and virtuous, who were sustained by blood and by powerful men who could have protected them. And could he now endure to see an obscure and almost unprotected female laugh to scorn the man who made all Italy, from one extremity to another, tremble at his name?

But now Valentino was about to be able to satisfy his revenge, and he said to himself—"Thou wilt pay me dear for the torture I have endured, cooped up in these walls." And, in truth, his confinement in those narrow rooms, like the close walls of a prison, accustomed as he was to the splendid life of the Roman Court, might well have seemed hard to him if he had been a man to weigh any privation, however severe, to gain his end. But he had not been wanting in devices for killing the time. Besides the hours he had to pass with Gonzales, and those consumed with Don Michele in perfecting his infernal plot against Ginevra, there were daily sent to him from Romagna, by means of his most confidential agents, letters and advices upon passing events, messengers arriving and setting out by night, verifying, to the letter, the assertion

of Macchiavelli, who, in writing to the Comune of Florence, shortly before this time, said, "Of all the Courts in the world that where the most profound secresy is preserved, is the Court of the Duke." And although he did not clearly expose the reasons, he left all at liberty to understand, that upon all imprudent tongues he imposed the silence of the dead.

This correspondence was maintained by means of light vessels, which plied along the coast of Romagna, and anchored under the shelter of certain rocks at the foot of Gargano. From thence the messengers came, in a small boat, under the cover of night, to the castle, and from their crews Don Michele had chosen picked men for his expedition. During the evening of which we are speaking, while the castle was filled with noise and revelry, Valentino was sitting before a table, turning over, under the lamp, to beguile the hours, a large pile of papers the couriers of the preceding day had brought him. He was dressed to a mantle, fastened before by a row of small buttons, with bust and sleeves of black satin, tightly fitted, and covered with several stripes of white velvet, ruffled, and only united to the arm in four places, by bands of the same stuff. Under the collar of the mantle, three or four buttons were opened, which exposed a coat of the finest mail worn underneath, a dress the Duke seldom laid off. Those who have visited in Rome the Borghese Gallery, will remember to have seen a portrait of the Duke by the hand of Raphael in this very dress.

Despite the strength of his constitution, he was troubled, at intervals, with a malignant humor similar to the erysipelas, which sometimes lay concealed in his blood, and at others broke out in eruptions upon the skin, particularly the face At such periods, the livid paleness of his countenance changed into a spongious red, full of small ulcers, which discharged fetid humors, when the loathsome deformity of his face inspired with disgust even those who were continually attached to his person. But a soul like his could not have clothed itself in a more appropriate covering. His confinement for many days, so contrary to his usual custom of life, especially in the Spring season had unbound those malignant humors,

and brought them out in more dreadful action upon his features and fired his whole being with an inexplicable and ungovernable fury, the ordinary consequence of such distempers.

About eight o'clock, when the ball was commencing in the hall overhead, the door of the Duke's room was slyly opened by a man dressed in dark red, tightly fitting breeches, a mantle reaching to the middle of the thighs, with a black cap drawn over his eyes, a sword and a dagger, and he bore a package under his arm. Valentino raised his countenance, and the messenger came forward with a salutation, and laid the package on the table without speaking. The Duke laid a hand upon the package, and said to the messenger:—

"To-night I leave this place—go into the farthest room and secret thyself, and whatever thou mayest hear come not forth till I call thee."

The man went out of the door opposite the one he had entered, and Cæsar Borgia taking from his belt a small dagger that glistened in the light, cut the red silk bands which bound the package with apostolic seals. It was a letter in parchment, written to him, he supposed, by one of his men whom he kept at the court of Rome. As he opened it a little golden ball rolled out upon the table. At the sight of it the Duke sprang to his feet with suspicion; but examining more attentively the seals, and the writing, he became re-assured, and resumed his seat. Nor should his alarm be considered ungrounded. The modes of administering poison at that period were so murderous and subtle, even to the sending of it sealed in letters in such a manner that on opening them the fatal effect was immediately produced. It was natural in the Duke, if at the sight of an object he did not expect, he was startled, for if ever a man lived in this world capable of putting with his first thought, an infernal construction on anything, he was the man, without a question.

The letter was written in a cypher, the key of which no one had but himself and the Pope. He knew the character well, and he read it rapidly—such was its language:—

"A few days since we had a long interview with the ambassador of the most Christian king, who strongly urged us

to enter the League against the Catholic king, to spoil him of the Realm, even offering us (wonderful) supplies in subduing Siena, and the State of the Count Gio. Giordano; to which conditions we have not wished to acceed till we learned of your success with the magnificent Gonzales. We cannot believe that France, although at the present moment she may seem irresistible in arms, can long make head-way against the army of Ferdinando, under the command of such a leader, who can so easily receive supplies, or recover from his dangers, by means of the sea. The French troops unwillingly sustain a harrassing and protracted war. It will therefore be wise policy to keep in with both, and in the mean time the two armies will come to some encounter, which will end in something, and we shall then know what course to adopt.

Maestro Amet, Ambassador from the Sultan, reasoning with us of the wonderful experiments of the art (astrology, I suppose) showed us, that through the influence of Saturn, which with Jupiter and Venus, is in the chamber of the Sun in the ascendant, that we are to encounter great peril during the present year, against which he has counciled us to provide, by carrying continually about us a ball of gold, like this I send you for the

same purpose. VALE,

Dat. Romae in Ædibus Vatic, Die XV, Mensis Martii IDIII."

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As the Duke of Romagna read his father's letter, he fell into deep meditation, alternately casting his glance from the manuscript to the golden ball he kept rolling between his fingers. His face assumed a smile, in which could be read contempt on one side, for he believed neither in God or his saints, but on the other a timid and suspicious credulity, for he had faith in astrology—so true is it that the human mind must repose on some principle that stretches beyond this world. Even had he not already determined to leave that same night for Romagna, the contents of that letter would have brought him to the decision. He thought Don Michele and his companions could not long retard their coming. He therefore placed the golden ball next to his breast, with the air of a man who seems to say,

"let the worst come," and began to gather, in a single package, the papers and effects he was to take with him.

In a few moments all was in readiness. He then returned to the seat he had left, and knowing not what to do with himself, once more drewforth the golden ball, and turned it over carefully again and again, and passed it from one hand to an other, thinking of the sacrament it contained, and of him who had sent it; then wandering on from one idea to another, to the Religion of which he was the head; and to articles of faith even he himself had once believed; of his splendid station, the fruit of the subjection of the people to the Holy See. He laughed scornfully in his heart at the credulity of the mass, and thought—"but I know how to turn them to account." And then he heard a voice come feebly up from the depths of his soul, that shook that edifice of pride, of violence, and irreligion. It said—"And if it be true."

The Duke did not wish to heed the voice, but he could not silence it. He rose in agitation, walked rapidly up and down the room, and did his utmost to divert his mind. It was all in vain—that "and if it be true" chased him, harrassed his soul, and annihilated, if I may so say, all the sweets and the honors of power, and cast a dull cold mist over the magnificence of his fortune. He cast himself on the bed, hiding with desperation his face in his hands, raving like a mad man. In a few moments he succeeded in calming himself a little, his eyelids weighed down like lead—they closed, and he fell asleep.

But while he slept his fancies followed on in the same train. He imagined himself in Rome, on the road that leads from the Castle to St. Peter's, the heavens and the earth were convulsed, all changed, all filled with darkness and lamentations. He tried to fly to St. Peter's, but could not, and his breath was choked with suffocation. He seemed to be held to the spot and as he gazed around him he saw the host he had betrayed, assassinated and poisoned, and they caught him by the hair and the flesh with long desperate howlings. And finally, without knowing how he got there, he found himself in St. Peter's, in the midst of an indefinable chaos; dark, full of weepings,

rockings and tremblings of walls, the bursting open of tombs, and the wanderings of ghosts, and all the while he was torn in pieces by the victims he had sacrificed, crying in his ear "THE JUSTICE OF GOD." This then, thought he, is that Judgment I believed would never come—And then he rushed forward, and with a desperate struggle sought refuge near the Pope, whom he saw seated on his throne at the foot of the church, surrounded by a palid dim light. But he was repulsed by his own brother the Duke of Candia, whose wounds were still fresh, and instead of blood came forth a fætid discharge, and his form was slimy and swollen like a putrid corpse dragged from the water, and on the other side the Duke di Beselli, and Astorre Manfred, and women and children all weeping and extending their arms to the Pope crying—Justice and Vengeance.

The Duke started from sleep, and sprang up, and sat on the side of the bed wide awake, (The clock had a few minutes before struck nine). The hum of many voices, the noise, the murmur of gaiety, came faintly down from the halls of the Castle over his head, hardly passing the massive ceiling. That same scream that had interrupted the conversation of Donna Elvira and Fanfulla, the Duke heard for he was still nearer. It seemed to be just before the door of his apartment which opened on a sandy slope of beach between the sea and the walls of the Castle. He stepped out to see who had given the scream; he saw nothing but an open boat whose prow was lightly moored on the sand. He looked up to the balconies and windows but he saw no one and was about to enter his room again, but he took a few steps towards the boat, and, stretching out his neck, he saw a woman lying in the bottom of the boat, with her face hid between her hands, weeping.

After the first moment of surprise he resolved to advance, and slipping into the boat he put one arm under the female's waist, and the other under her knees, and raised her from the boat and bore her, half senseless as she was, into his own room and laid her on the bed. But what was his astonishment, when, on lighting the lamp, he recognised the face of Ginevra. The image of that countenance had been too deeply impressed on his recollection ever to be forgotten. But he could not con-

ceive what strange casualty had now thrown her alone into his hands after she had eluded the snairs and plots of Don Michele.

"Henceforth," said he to himself, "I'll believe at least there's a devil, for none but a friendly devil could render me such a glorious service." Placing the lamp on a small table near the head of the bed, he seated himself on the bedside, and carefully watched the movements of Ginevra's face to catch the first sign of returning consciousness. The delight of enjoying at last a long delayed but cursed vengeance, lit up his eyes with a liquid flame, and electric sparks flashed out from under his eyelashes, and the humors that issued from his face seemed to boil, till his entire countenance took the color of blood. Never did the face of a man wear a more horrible expression than Cæsar Borgia's at that moment, for with that disgusting distemper, in all its deformity, were mingled all the black lineaments of infernal crime. And there lay the wretched Ginevra pallid, immoveable, despair sculptured on her face, all abandoned and broken-hearted, with that fiendish wretch gazing down on her triumphantly-it was a painful-a dreadful picture!

In this position they both remained several minutes, and Ginevra might be called happy, till she recovered her consciousness. Her eyes were closed, and she could not know where she was, and the face of the terrible being who was now her absolute master, was for the moment, shut out from her gaze. But this could not last. Poor Ginevra's hour had come! A slight shudder told Cæsar Borgia that his victim was about to open her eyes. In that place, and at that hour, he was certain no one could obstruct him—her screams would not be heard through those thick ceilings, while the halls above were ringing with gay festivity. Thus finding himself entirely secure, he formed the infernal resolution of enjoying, without losing a moment, the fruit fortune had so unexpectedly thrown before him.

At length a deep sigh escaped from the breast of Ginevra which raised the covering thrown over her bosom. For a moment she opened her eyes and closed them immediately.

A second and a third time, and then began to fix them on the strange massive ceiling above her, but she only saw it indistinctly, without an idea of the place where she was; and her eyes recoiling from the image of that loathsome countenance, turned away with an expression of desolateness that would have moved the compassion of any other man in the world. As she gradually recovered her consciousness, the first recollection that came rushing back on her, was the image of Fieramosca, in the gallery, at the feet of Donna Elvira.

Oh, Ettore!" she said, hardly articulating the syllable, "it was true then! I am betrayed by thee!" and covering her eyes and forehead with the palms of her hands, she held them for a few moments. Valentino heard that name, his lips slightly contracted into a scornful smile. Only till now, did Ginevra remember she should be in the boat, and raising herself on her elbow to get up, she found herself on a soft bed, and opening her eyes in alarm, she saw the Duke—she gave a scream, but his hand cut it short on her lips, by seizing her throat, and he forced her to lie back on her bed.

"Don't cry, Ginevra," he said, "thou wilt only waste breath. I'm rejoiced thou hast come to see me, and I'll reward thee for the trouble of taking a sail at this hour. However, thou wert not searching for me. Is it not so? What dost thou wish? All balls don't turn out round."

Poor Ginevra heard these words with a tremor which annihilated her strength. It was long since she had seen the Duke, and she did not recognize him, but she was horror-struck at his face; and she had, moreover, a confused recollection of that countenance. Conscious, however, she could not defend herself, she only exclaimed:

"Signore! who are you? Have pity on me! What do you wish? Leave me * * and the Duke—"

"Dost thou remember, Ginevra, at Rome how thou did'st conduct thyself many years ago, towards one who loved thee then as he did his own life, and who would have made thee gifts, and loaded thee with caresses that would have overwhelmed thy heart? Dost thou remember thou didst use towards him manners that would have been insulting, even to a

stable-boy? Dost thou remember thou didst scorn his love and despise his offers—that thou didst bear thyself with a pride that could not have been pardoned in a Queen! Well! know thou to whom that was done? I am the man, and know that man is Cæsar Borgia!"

This name fell like a mass of lead upon the heart of Ginevra and blotted out all hope. But she lay without any answer, gazing on the Duke, all trembling, as she would have gazed on a tiger that held her in his claws; and the idea hardly entered her head she should try to melt his heart by an appeal.

"And now thou knowest who I am," continued the Duke, "thinkest thou of compassion from me? And yet I could bend my will and restrain myself from visiting on thy head the vengeance I can and should visit on thee. But on one condition only, Ginevra—thou must give me what thou alone canst give."

These words, less violent, could not but rekindle in the breast of Ginevra a ray of hope; and with her hands clasped, endeavoring not to show in her countenance the disgust she felt for him, she knelt before him, as the penitent kneels before the cross, and prayed him not to crush a feeble and unprotected woman, already broken-hearted.

"I entreat you, sir, by the agony of Jesus, by that day, in which even you—although now so mighty on earth—shall stand a naked soul in the presence of the Eternal Judge: * *—If you ever had a female you loved, tell me—if she had fallen into the hands of another, and was praying in vain for mercy—if your mother, if your sister, could be in the dreadful crisis I am, and were praying, and praying all in vain—would you not call down the vengeance of heaven, oh, tell me truth! against the wretch who had committed the outrage?"

These words, which associated the idea of virtue and purity with the names of Vannozza and Lucretia Borgia, provoked a smile on the face of Valentino, who knew somewhat of their history; but it was a sinister smile, which only increased Ginevra's terror. But she ceased not her entreaties, and her voice gradually assumed a thrilling tone of lamentation, till,

through her sighs and groans, the last words hardly found utterance.

"I am a desolate and forsaken woman,—what good, what glory, can a powerful Prince, like you, find in pouring out your vengeance on my poor heart? Who knows the moment will not come in which the recollection of having shown me mercy will not be a balsam to your heart?"

To attempt to tell the wild anguish and despair of the wretched Ginevra, at this terrible moment, to describe her tears, her pleadings, and, at last, her maddening screams, and frantic imprecations, would be impossible, and the picture would be too horrible for the reader.—We will only say, her fate was fixed, and irrevocable!

In the meantime, returning with his companions, with his hands empty, foiled in his plot, and trembling to meet the scorn of his master, Don Michele reached the foot of the castle, Finding the two boats, of Ginevra and the messenger drawn up to the Duke's door, he began to feel some suspicion. He landed, and went up to the door. Hearing a noise within, and suspicious some ill-luck had befallen them, he tried the door and found it locked; nor would his fears have been dispelled had not the well-known voice of Cæsar Borgia, crying out "Wait," convinced him his lord was in no danger. He could not divine the reason why he was not at once admitted, and he put his ear to the keyhole to listen.

After some minutes of the most profound silence, unbroken, save by the bursts of revelry above, or the echo of the distant laugh, and the murmur of the light waves gently rocking the two boats against each other, Don Michele, who was all ear, suddenly heard the Duke's voice, with a scornful laugh, saying,—

"Now go and pray God and his Saints;" and then hearing his footsteps approaching the door, he withdrew, just as the Duke turned the key and came forth.

Don Michele began to make his excuses, but he was soon interrupted;—"Tell me all this at another time, for the present I know a good deal more about this business than thee."

These words would, perhaps, have made Don Michele sup-

pose his master was angry with him, had he not known by the sound of his voice and the expression of his face, that he had a secret, with which he had nothing to do.

Turning to the men who had accompanied Don Michele, Valentino said:—"Quick, there, get ye into the boat, and wait

for me under St. Ursula. And you, come with me."

The former sprang to their oars, and were soon out of sight. Don Michele and the Duke entered his apartments, and came out soon after, bringing Ginevra, whom they placed in the boat where she had been found. Don Michele discovered on her clothes, on her left side, marks of blood!

When this was done, the messenger was called from his concealment, in the bed-room, and the three stepped into the boat without exchanging a word. They rowed on, and over-

taking the other skiff, they entered it.

The Duke sat on the stern, and Don Michele before him at his feet. He now knew why his master cared so little for the failure of his plot, but he wished to narrate to him the reasons why he had come back to the castle without effecting his object. He, therefore, related to him minutely the measures he had adopted, and how they had been assailed by a superior force, from whom they narrowly escaped, after losing their captive.

"But it was a bad job for one of them," he added, giving a sign to Pietraccio, who, as we have seen, had been struck on the head by an oar, and fallen senseless in the bottom of the boat, where he remained a prisoner. He had just that moment come to his senses, and was seated about two yards from the Duke. The men, believing him nearer dead than alive, and seeing the impossibility of escaping from their hands, had not disturbed him.

"This ruffian," continued Don Michele, "leaped into the boat, like a fury, but Rosso brought him to, with his oar, under the ear, by a blow that put him to bed. I thought he was dead, but I see he's plucking up a little."

During the conversation of Don Michele, Pietraccio had become aware he was sitting before the man whom he had been searching for that very evening. Valentino perceived that the bandit was eyeing him with a scowl, and a wild maniac look, which made him suspect he was plotting some malicious design against him, and he was about to order him to be thrown into the sea. Don Michele, too, who, as the reader will remember, had overheard the last words of the assassin's mother in the dungeon of St. Ursula, and her command to seek vengeance on Cæsar Borgia; Don Michele also saw, as he eyed him furtively that he was meditating some desperate act. The Duke's assassin agent, although he served his master faithfully, because he was well paid, would, nevertheless, have rejoiced to see the bandit make him pay dear for an old injury, if he could himself have escaped all imputation. The reader may easily imagine how he felt towards his master, when he knew that the woman, who had died in the dungeon of the tower, under his own eyes, was his wife!

When the encounter of Fieramosca and his companions brought Pietraccio into his power, several projects flashed confusedly across his mind, and he half laid a plan to aid the assassin to avenge his wrongs upon Cæsar Borgia; but in so short a space of time he could form no definite plan, and without fixing on any particular way, he was only resolved on seeking the first occasion that presented itself; and now that occasion had most likely come. In fact, a moment of silence followed the last words of Don Michele, which gave the young bandit a calm interval, to execute his desperate purpose. He rose from the spot where he lay, and passing to the side of Don Michele, who pretended to try to stop him as he shot by, he sprung upon Valentino, like a wild beast on his prey, to tear him to pieces with his teeth and claws. But the Duke, who was on his guard, was ready for him, and Don Michele had hardly time to seize Pietraccio by the shoulder before he fell dead into his hands, transfixed by the dagger the Duke wore at his belt, and which he had branded, at that critical moment, with incredible swiftness.

The whole affair had been so instantaneous, that the rowers only turned around at the noise when all was over, and resting on their oars, they saw Valentino sheathing his dagger, as he kicked from him the still palpitating corpse, and ordered it thrown into the sea. "Madman, scoundrel," exclaimed Don Michele, apparently alarmed at the danger the Duke had run. "But no man could make me believe that fellow was not something else than what he pretended. A few days ago I found him in the dungeon of the tower of the convent, shut up with his mother, and they had both been taken by the police with a band of brigands; the mother died from wounds received in defending herself, and before giving up the ghost, she gave her son a necklace, telling him some story (which has escaped my memory), saying she had received the necklace from a lover at Pisa. * * But * * wait, Rosso, before you pitch him into the sea, I've a mind to see if he has it yet round his neck. The gold, if nothing else, is worth more to us than the fish."

Suiting the action to the word, he stripped off the young bandit's doublet, and finding the chain, he held it out in his hand and showed it to the Duke, who had been eagerly listening to his words. Valentino was not so completely master of himself as to conceal the agitation this unexpected sight called up. For a moment he was out of himself, and his hands, clasped on the jewel suspended from the necklace, fell to his legs as though his last strength had left him. He again took the seat he had before occupied, and gave an order the second time, in a husky voice, to cast the body into the sea. Turning his head the other way, he knew he had been obeyed, from the plunge that followed, and the splashing of some water into the boat. He gathered up the chain, clasping it in his fist, and folding his mantle around him, he rested his head upon his hand and was silent.

Feigning respect for the meditations of the Duke, Don Michele went forward and sat down among the oarsmen, and all moved on in silence together; nor was a sound heard, as they rowed on, but the dripping of the water from the oars when they rose from the sea. This villain of Valentino had done what, till then, perhaps no one had ever before done to that man. He did succeed in stirring up memories in his heart, which must have been something like remorse, and a remorse so void of every consolation, it must have resembled

the torments of the damned. Don Michele felt, too, how great was his triumph, for he knew well, by experience, the nature of what he had so well tasted.

After these incidents, they went on their voyage, and reached the vessel which was waiting for them, and they spread their sails, without loss of time, for their return to Romagna. But we will forward the villains no further.

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CHAPTER XVII.

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The departure of Fieramosca and his friends from the ball, had been observed only by a few, and it had not disturbed the general gaiety. Fanfulla had made his way so rapidly from the terrace, where he had been with Donna Elvira, that he had escaped observation. He had gone to lay aside the spoils of his friend, and returned to mingle with the dancers as though nothing had happened, laughing in his sleeve at the success of his joke, and dying to find somebody to tell it to. The daughter of Gonzales wandered about, seeking for a sight of Ettore amongst the crowd, but she could not find him, nor divine the reason for his wish to conceal himself from her.

Nearly an hour had thus passed, when Brancaleone and Inigo entered, and asked for Gonzales of the first they met. He was pointed out in a corner of the room, engaged in conversation with several of the French Barons. They advanced to him, and drawing him aside, related to him all that had happened,—that they knew Valentino was in the castle, and this violence had been committed under his order; and they besought him to tell them how they were to proceed. Gonzales, who knew his guest to be capable of such villainies, and even greater, if necessary, after a moment of confusion requested the two knights to follow him, as he led the way to the apartments of Cæsar Borgia. On their way he met Don Garcia, and beckoned him to follow.

He did not confess the Duke was in the castle, for he would not break his faith; but remembering that he had taken his leave of him that very day, telling him he must set out in the night, it seemed strange to him he should have chosen the very last moment of his stay to work so dark a deed. At all events, he was determined to have the matter cleared up, and calling for two lamps, he bound on his sword, and led the way through a passage which conducted to a winding staircase. They descended, and he opened two small iron doors that guarded the entrance. There was yet another door to be opened, and Gonzales stopped, and told his attendants, in a low voice, to wait for him in silence, and not to advance till he called for them. He then opened the door and descended to the Duke's apartments, which he found deserted, without lights, and everything in great confusion,—here a chair and there a table overturned, near the bed a fallen lantern, with the oil spilt upon the floor, and the adjoining rooms all empty. He then called his attendants, and, after a moment's reflection, he said:

"In keeping faith with a villain, I would not expose the innocent to the risk of outrage. Remember that the Duke has been here for many days. He was determined to-night or to-morrow morning to depart; of the rest I can say nothing more, for nothing more do I know. We are all persuaded he is capable of any crime, and he may well have been the author of all this. Take such a course, then, as seems best to you; pursue him if you wish—you have my full permission—and you, Don Diego, lend them all the aid in your power."

Inigo was for scouring the sea, with the hope of finding his boat still lurking around Barletta; but nothing could he spy through the windows; and unwilling to waste time in unbarring the ponderous mass, he ran to the small door which opened on the bit of beach we have already described. He was familiar with every portion of the castle. As he stepped out, he saw a little boat, and in the bottom of it a young female, whom he could not recognize, but it instantly occurred to him it might be Ginevra.

He screamed for his companions, who came rushing down to the boat; but when they saw her thus abandoned, they knew not what to think. With all the care possible, they carried her to the Duke's bed, which they found turned up in confusion. They spread it up as well as they could, and Gonzales, when he saw the wretched creature all covered with bruises, her face scratched, her hair dishevelled, and bearing marks of blood, he rushed up stairs to find some female to whose care she might be committed. Not wishing to make the matter public just then, ignorant as he was of all the circumstances, he thought he would commit her to Vittoria Colonna, whose discretion was already well known to him.

In the banquet hall he found the daughter of Fabrizio, and led her quietly to the bed of Ginevra, narrating to her on the way what had taken place, and how necessary, in that hour of darkness, were all her resources of consolation for the desolate being, none of them knew. The generous heart of Vittoria Colonna accepted the charge with eagerness and gratitude, and when she reached the bed, and gazed for a single moment on the face of the sufferer, she began to arrange the couch and the pillows with all that solicitude and tenderness with which Providence has so specially endowed the female heart, making her almost the only dispenser of consolation to the afflicted.

Ginevra lay in a sort of lethargy, brought on by her many sufferings, which had ended in a total prostration of strength; she could neither be said to be out of her senses, nor in her right mind. She lay where she had been placed; if they moved her arm or raised her head, she made no resistance, nor seemed to be conscious she had been stirred. Her eyes were open, but they had lost all their life; they wandered around the room vacant and expressionless. Vittoria knew that the less violent the symptoms of this state appeared, the more cause there was for apprehension; but she sent away the men and called in some women, who administered spirits and cordials, which soon restored to Ginevra the life that seemed almost extinguished.

The first sign she gave of having recovered the use of her faculties, was a wild momentary gaze around the room, followed by a rapid spring from the bed, as if she wished to escape. But her exhaustion was so great she would have fallen to the ground, had not Vittoria caught her in her arms, and by gentle violence replaced her upon the bed.

"Oh God!" exclaimed Ginevra, "Are you, too, in league with him? You seem too gentle to be so; you are young and beautiful, but yet you have no compassion for me?"

"No," answered Vittoria, pressing her hands to her lips, "we, and all in this castle, are here to render you aid, to help you and defend you. Oh! be quiet, for the love of heaven, for here you have no one to fear!"

"Well, then, if it be so," said Ginevra, throwing her feet

again from the bed, "let me, let me go!"

Vittoria, thinking this wish to escape arose from wandering of mind, and seeing her so weak and disfigured, tried to persuade her by kind words to have patience for a moment; but the horror for that place had now become an uncontrollable mania, which opposition only inflamed, and she put forth all her power, as she screamed, in tears-

"Madonna, for the love of God, and of the holy Virgin, I ask thee only to be taken from this bed! Throw me into the sea, the flames-but, oh! take me from this bed-it will not be long I shall trouble you! A drop of water, for I feel that my vitals are on fire! O let me speak a few words with Father Mariano of S. Dominico! But let us go away-let me go! *

And as she said this, she rose from the bed, Vittoria no longer offering her any resistance; for she saw her desire was firmly fixed; and not without great exertion from her and her maids, they carried Ginevra, by main force, up the stairway to a retired room, where Gonzales had ordered a bed arranged. Here undressed and laid to rest, she heaved a sigh, and said—

"Signora, God sees everything, and He sees if in my heart I pray Him to reward thee for the good thou hast done-Virgin, I thank thee! And you, Signora, who are the cause, at least, why I shall not die in despair, I only pray thee to make haste and send for Father Mariano. Tell me what time is it-day or night? I no longer know what world I am in!"

"It's eleven at night," answered Vittoria. "We will send for Father Mariano, but the alarm under which you are suffering, gives you unnecessary fear. Calm yourself-keep quiet, my dear girl! Here you are safe, and I will not leave you."

"Oh! no, do n't leave me!—If you knew what consolation your kind eyes give my heart, when they gaze on me!—Sit down here on my little bed—there, I will move a little towards the wall—no, no, have no fear of disturbing me—nay, here I lie better." And remaining some moments in a stupid state, she was seized with a shivering of horror; and almost beside herself, she exclaimed—

"Oh! if you knew what horror!—to be buried alive!—to be smothered under heaps of corpses!—to see above you those fiendish faces, full of corruption, laughing still! * * * Oh! God—Oh! God—it seems I am there yet! * * *" And as she said this, she clasped her protector to her bosom, who, seeing all words were useless in her wild ravings, embraced her, and strove to quiet her by the warmest caresses.

"Oh! my lady," continued Ginevra, hiding her head in her bosom, "I know not what I say—I know I am talking wildly, but I have been too, too cruelly assassinated! And I did not deserve it! * * * What, what had I done to make him treat me so? * * * And the Holy Virgin had promised to conduct me to safety! * * * I had prayed to her so sincerely, and then to abandon me! It is true, I have been a sinner, but more unfortunate than guilty—oh! yes, a great deal more—and what I have suffered no one can tell but me!"

"Yes my dear, I believe it," answered Vittoria, "but calm yourself and say not that the Virgin has abandoned you, do you not see she has sent me to dry your tears, and restore you from your afflictions? See, I am by your side * I will not leave you, and if this be enough do not fear you will be forsaken. But if your case demands the aid of others, if the one who has outraged you is to be punished, if some disorder is to be remedied, speak, trust to me * * Fabrizio Colonna, my father * * * Gonzales * * all are ready to offer themselves * *."

"Ah, my lady," interrupted Ginevra, "all the world together could never give me a peaceful moment, or extract a drop of poison from my cup. In this world all is over * *. But I thank you * * Oh! yes for the last consolation I shall feel you have administered to me, and therefore do not call me

ungrateful if I do not tell you my woes, for it is impossible, they cannot be told, and if I do not accept your offers * * God will reward you for them * * He can do it. * * I can only thank you * and kiss those blessed hands which will support my head in the last hour, and then close my eyes. * * Promise me you will not abandon me till I am all cold in death * * *."

Vittoria tried to banish such thoughts from her mind, and persuade her that her life was in no danger, but Ginevra interrupted her—

"No! no! my lady its useless. I know what has taken place, do not deny me this consolation, my blessed angel. It is true? You will not deny me? There! See, I take advantage of your kind offers, and you can't call me proud or ungrateful. Will then you give me your promise?"

"Yes, yes, my dear, I promise you, if it be necessary."

"Oh! now I am tranquil, now call Father Mariano, and then all will be finished here below. * Give me another drop of water, for methinks I have burning coals in my heart * * that lamp, if you can take it away, it pains my sight. Pardon me for so much trouble—but it will soon be over."

When these little services had been rendered, Vittoria sat down on the couch, and shortly after Inigo who had gone to wake Father Mariano appeared at the entrance, and asked if he might admit him. "Come, come," said Ginevra.

A tall monk, of a pale and subdued countenance, half hidden under his cowl entered the door and approached the bed, saying, "Christ keep thee, Signora." The rest went out and he remained alone with the sufferer.

The presence of this man of God, his manners, full of that glorious charity which flows from a consciousness how divine and august is the mission of comforting man in his distress, showed at a single glance that all the passions and attachments of this world he had long ago forgotten.

His history was a mystery to the inhabitants of Barletta, and even to his brethren of the monastery of S. Dominico, in which, without any charge of the Order, he lived, surrounded by a kind of reverence which was inspired by the example of his

virtues, by his learning and the persuasion he was a victim of a religious persecution. It was whispered he had been in his time one of the first citizens of Florence of the sect of Piagnoni, or the mourners (whose founder was Gerolamo Savonarola), and that overwhelmed by the words of that terrible preacher, he had abandoned the world- and taken from his hands the Dominican gown in S. Marco. To these statements, which all esteemed true, were joined other reports more uncertain, that he had broken ties of heart to devote himself to the service of God. * * It was said that this sudden change had given rise to grave scandals, hatred, and vengeance on the part of the female abandoned, who inflamed a persecution against the monk by the Court of Rome, and after the death of the founder he had been with difficulty secreted by his superiors who had prevailed on him to escape in disguise, and take refuge under another name in the monastery of Barletta. Here in this unfrequented spot he had lived unknown.

These were the reports of his history, correctly calculated; but the darkest malevolence used have sought in vain for anything else to stain his name. In his heart the severe doctrines of Savonarola had found a soil prepared for the seed, and aided by his natural disposition, ready to sacrifice anything to truth, they had brought forth the fruit of charity and untiring zeal.

The martyr fires which had burnt his master to ashes, had consumed his whole sect together; and the papal vengeance had silenced those who detested the abuses of the Roman court. Father Mariano lived tranquilly in his seclusion, since God did not esteem him worthy of dying for the truth, contented in not being compelled to be an idle spectator of evils against which he was not permitted to lift up his voice.

Seating himself at the head of her bed, he blessed her and asked her if she wished to confess herself.

"Oh, yes! father," answered Ginevra, "I have no other desire left in the world, and had I not felt that my strength and my life were going, I would not have disturbed you at this time, but I have only a short time to live; but don't let us waste time, let me die in the grace of my Lord God, and with the blessing of the holy Roman Church."

"Life and death are in the hands of God," answered Father Mariano, "and his will be done. On your part do all you can, and I doubt not you will have his aid."

After the sign of the cross, and the ceremonies used at the

bed of the dying, he told her to proceed.

To open to him all her heart in its most secret depths, she had to give him a history of her life from the beginning, with her unfortunate marriage, the supposed death of her husband, and her wanderings from country to country. Her confession was interrupted by frequent faintings, and in part, badly connected, for her brain was too wild as she dwelt on so dismal a story.

"Father," said Ginevra, as she finished, "I have been for many years, it's true, with one who was not my husband, but I have committed no sin except in exposing myself to danger. God alone has saved me. I have neglected to seek out my husband since, assuring myself certainly that he was dead. But at last when I found him, I resolved to return to him immediately, and I began to execute my purpose; * * and with the help of the Virgin, I hoped I should succeed. But oh God! instead of that, where have I fallen?" * *

And here she related to Father Mariano how in landing at the foot of the castle, she saw Ettore and Elvira in close conversation, which so overcame her she had fallen to the bottom of the boat, and had only come to herself in the room of Valentino. When she had brought the relating of this cruel fact to a close, she broke into a convulsion of weeping and despair, and incoherent words, which but too well showed the growing alienation of her mind.

Moved in the depth of his heart, the good friar, with that discretion the importance of the crisis demanded, did all he could to calm her agitation for a long time. He was unsuccessful till exhausted nature yielded to that paroxysm which left the unhappy sufferer more reduced and enfeebled than

"Father," continued Ginevra, in a still feebler voice, "is it possible then, that God, that the Virgin, have disregarded my tears, and cursed my pain? The vengeance of God has fallen like a thunderbolt upon my head when methought they promised

compassion. The punishment of my sins has already been enormous, * * but I fear a punishment more tremendous still— * * I fear I am to die despairing of pardon— * * I feel that God is hardening my heart in these last moments — * * I am just passing away, and I can neither forget that man, nor pardon her. * * Oh! pray for me! Help me while it is yet time! Speak to me of hope." * *

"Of hope?" interrupted the monk, "do you not know that he who sends me to you is that God who purchased your salvation by the death of the cross-who promises you mercy, and would promise it if you were loaded with the sins of the whole world, that you may not do injustice to such infinite love by despairing of his pardon? And to win that crown of glory and joy unceasing, what does he ask of you? He asks you to love him as he has loved you; to suffer a little for his love as he has suffered so much for yours; to pardon him who has injured you, as he pardoned the beating, the outrages, the insults, and the death. Behold him in heaven where he is waiting for you and longing to clasp you to his arms to dry your tears, and turn them into joy unspeakable. The enemy who held you as his own cannot bear to have you escape him; he is trying every device to ensnare you; he attempts to rob you of hope, but he shall not succeed. I, the minister of the Eternal God," he exclaimed, as he rose to his feet in the solemn act of extending his hands over the head of Ginevra, " swear to you by his holy name, that your salvation is written with pardon in the book of life, if by a single act of love you knew how to purchase so great a boon. The divine blood of the Word descends into your soul like a ray from heaven; it is his blood that washes you from every stain; it fills you with peace and joy-with pain for having offended Him who spilt it for you. May it give you strength to spurn and contemn the assaults of the enemy who is seeking your ruin."

'Oh! my father," answered Ginevra, all subdued with veneration by the words she had heard, "God speaks through your mouth. I can then again hope, and am not abandoned for ever?"

"No, blessed soul! for the more cruel the conflict, the more

glorious will be the palm. But now, that God gives you grace and time to feel your sins and his abundant mercies, think not of turning back; and remember what he tells thee; 'it would have been better for them not to have known the way of life, than to forsake it after you had known.' 'He that putteth hands to the plough and looketh back, is not fit for the kingdom of God.' The image of that man cannot forsake your heart—see where you had treasured up your hopes, from whom you expected joy and consolation—see for whom you have neglected the love of your God! For one who could not preserve the wordly and culpable confidence he inspired in your heart; and who has, at the first breath, turned his back on you to seek another. Such is the value of the world's promises; and yet, to follow him, you contemn the infallible promises of the Eternal; and when He shows you so clearly, the vanity of your desires, you almost reject instead of prostrating yourself before this miracle of goodness. Can you not pardon him? And in what has he offended you? First, he even does not know her-besides, she is a free maiden, and can listen without crime to his addresses. Oh! how should you rather love her, and adore in her the instrument adopted by the hand of God for your salvation. And I, too, am a sinner—I was, yes, I was depraved, and so blinded as to seek in created beings peace of soul. God called me-I followed his voice with bitterness at first; but, then, how rich a recompense has not divine goodness accorded me, for the small sacrifice! What tranquil joy of loving, and being sure of a recompense, immense, eternal! Oh! believe me, blessed soul! that I am a man and a sinner, greater than you, and I have been through the proof-everything is gall, and uncertainty, and darkness, but the love of God-the service of God, and the hope in his mercy."

"Oh! yes," exclaimed Ginevra, interrupting him, heaving a broken sigh, "You have opened my understanding—you have conquered me; yes, I pardon, I pardon with all my heart, and I will show the proof of it. Send her to me and let me see her, and embrace her before I die; and may they live happy together as I hope God will have mercy upon me in the life to come."

The monk fell kneeling to the side of the couch, and raising his eyes and his hands to heaven, he exclaimed:—

"Variis et miris modis vocat nos Deus—how many and how wonderful the ways God takes to call us to himself! Let us adore the work of his mercy."

After remaining in prayer a moment, he rose, blessed and absolved the young sufferer, and then continued:—

"Well, you are firmly resolved to see her, and do this act of paradise?"

"Yes, father—send her to me, for I feel the need of pardoning her before I die."

"And God, I tell you in his name, has already pardoned you —you are already his; and this holy purpose is the sign of your salvation."

The monk started to go in search of D. Elvira, and Ginevra called him back.

"I have still one favor," she said, to ask you, "and do not deny me if you desire to see me die in peace. When I am no more, go to the French camp, find my husband (among the soldiers—he is called Grajano d'Asti; and is under the pay of the Duke de Nemours), and tell him that in my last hour I implored pardon of God, as I ask it of him, if I have done him an injury—tell him, that by the solemnity of the death-bed, I swear to him that my soul, as it leaves the body, is as pure as when he received me from my father—let him not curse my memory; and have him say one mass for the peace of my soul."

"Be blessed! * * and be calm—your desire shall be executed."

"One favor more I wish to ask of you," continued Ginevra.
"I know not if it be well or ill, but God, who sees my inmost soul, knows if my motive be pure. * * I wish you would seek also him and Ettore Fieramosca—he is a lancer of Signor Prospero; tell him I will pray for him, that I pardon him—that is * * no, do n't speak to him of pardon, for, after all, I am not quite certain * * it might have been another that resembles him * * no, no, tell him only to think of the soul * * that I feel at this hour how great has been our error * *

tell him to think of another life, for this passeth away like a vapor, and warn him to be ready when the trying hour comes, and let him * * try to make his salvation sure. And then tell him that if God, as I hope, accords me his mercy, I will pray for him that he may come off victorious from the battle-field, and cover the arms of Italy with glory." Father Mariano gave a sigh, and said, "Also this I will do."

The dying sufferer lay some time without speaking, and the memory came back on her mind of Zoraide, the being she had protected, and against whom, too, during those last days, she had felt some unkindness: she besought the monk to seek her also, in the convent of St. Ursula, and consign to her a necklace, with her last salutations, and request her to wear it for the giver's sake. She recommended to his care that unfortunate, forsaken being, and besought him to find her some safe retreat, and, above all, to try to make her a Christian. After which she continued—

"One more charity I ask of you, and as it is the last, I'm sure you wont deny it. Have me buried in the little subterranean chapel of St. Ursula, clothed in the dress of the convent. It consoles me to think I shall sleep in peace near the image of that Virgin, who has at last listened to my prayer, and put an end to all my miseries."

"Your desires," rejoined the monk, with difficulty restraining his tears, "shall all be executed." Having said this he went out and brought in Vittoria Colonna again; and seeing that Ginevra's strength was fast failing, he spoke in her name, that she might not waste her strength.

"Signora," said he, "I pray you to find Donna Elvira, and send her here: this poor sufferer wishes to say a word to her."

Vittoria, who was not prepared for such a request, felt a momentary surprise; but without making any reply left the room, as Ginevra said, "Pardon me for giving you this trouble, but there is no time to loose."

It was almost midnight, and the ball was over—the halls were being deserted, and the guests were descending the grand stairway, attended by the Barons of the Spanish army.—Gonzales had at that moment taken leave of the Duke de

Nemours and his cavaliers, who mounted their horses and returned, attended by a train of torches, to the camp.

In the court-yard there was a crowd, on foot and on horse-back, and the noise of the multitude echoed throughout the castle. The ladies, according to the custom of those times, mounted the horses behind the cavaliers who attended them, and the crowd began to vanish, and the noise subside, till the court in a few moments was entirely deserted, except by a few servants who were occupied in their work, passing back and forth.

Doors were heard opening and shutting, lamps were seen flitting past the balconies and windows, and at last, when the clock struck the hour of midnight, the gate warden raised the draw-bridge which led out on the piazza. The clanking of the ponderous chains ceased, and a dead silence followed which was unbroken for the rest of the night.

Vittoria had, in the meantime, passed through the halls where they were arranging the furniture and extinguishing the lights, and reached the room where Donna Elvira had already retired and begun to lay aside her ornaments worn at the ball. She found her thus occupied, assisted by her maids, who seemed to have lost all their patience by the discourteous manner of their mistress. She was excited, her face was flushed, and the expression of her countenance seemed to indicate anything but satisfaction with the scenes she had, during the evening, passed through. When she saw Vittoria enter, an inward consciousness, begotten, perhaps, by secret remorse, made her suspect that her friend would address her in a tone which, at that moment, she felt would be difficult to bear. She, therefore, received her with an appearance of surprise which did not entirely conceal her impatience. toria perceived it, but without appearing to notice it, requested her, in a sweet voice, to be kind enough to delay retiring for a quarter of an hour, and accompany her to the chamber of Ginevra, who had requested her presence. She was consequently obliged to explain to her how Ginevra came to be in the castle, and Gonzales' daughter, who, like all impetuous spirits, had, at the bottom, a good heart, was willing to go,

particularly as she found the visit had proved less disagreeable to her than she had anticipated.

They accordingly went together to Ginevra's chamber, and drew near her bed. Elvira's beauty had not shone forth so strikingly, even when she was robed in all her ornaments of gaiety, as now when her free hair was floating in long golden masses upon her shoulders. Father Mariano lowered his eyes, and poor Ginevra as she gazed on her, felt an inward rush of emotion, and heaved a sigh which excited all the compassion. of the friar's heart. The three females remained silent for a moment, when Ginevra raised herself on her elbow, saying:-

"Signora, you are astonished I have been so bold as to disturb you, since I neither know you, or am known to you myself-but one in my situation may be pardoned everything. But before I speak freely to you, I ought to ask your permission -may I say a few words to you with freedom? Whatever your answer may be, it will be soon sealed with me in the tomb-but may I speak to you in the presence of this lady, or do you wish us to be alone?"

"Oh!" replied Donna Elvira, "she is the dearest friend I have in the world, and she loves me far better than I deserve—speak

then, my dear lady, and we shall listen to you kindly."

"Well then if it be so, and you grant me liberty, there is only

one question I wish to ask you."

And then she stopped a moment, as if to gather strength, and prepare the question she knew not how to begin. Her resolution to pardon the one who had caused her such overwhelming grief, had been formed with all the sincerity of her heart-but who could be cruel enough to condemn this unfortunate being, if, at the moment she was about to become sure that her eyes had not deceived her, and that the young knight she saw at the feet of Donna Elvira, was, indeed, Ettore, she felt an invincible repugnance against knowing that dreadful certainty. Who would have the heart to condemn her, if she still cherished a dim hope of having herself mistaken Fieramosca for another. Be this as it may, we must believe that these sentiments were not yet entirely extinct, and they gave being to the 10* of an analysis and a second of an analysis and a second of the secon short lived doubt that caused this moment of silence. At last, however, she resolutely demanded in a clear voice:—

"Tell me then, and pardon me, if I dare to ask such a question—were you not this evening in the balcony over the sea, about nine o'clock, and was not Ettore Fieramosca at your feet?"

This interrogation, as unexpected as it was direct, shocked both her listeners, although for very different reasons. Elvira's countenance took the color of burning fire, and she could not utter a syllable. Ginevra, whose intense gaze was fixed on her face, understood all, and she felt her blood freeze in her veins—but she continued in a changed voice:—

"Signora, I am too bold, I know, but look on me, I am dying, and I ask of you, by that pardon we all hope for in the life to come, not to refuse me this favor—answer me—was you there? * was he? *

Donna Elvira thought she was dreaming; she turned a timid glance towards Vittoria, who seeing stamped on her face the dread she felt of her reproof, and knowing this was not the moment for showing it, embraced her, and re-assured her without saying a word.

Ginevra felt herself dying with the struggle of uncertainty. She extended her open hands, trembling, towards the maiden, and with a voice which seemed a groan of despair:—

"Well, then!"

Elvira drew her friend closer to her bosom, and dropping her eyes, answered:—

"Yes, * * * we were there." * *

The countenance of the heart-broken Ginevra, was so suddenly changed, she seemed to have become emaciated in a single instant. But she raised herself with difficulty, to sit up in bed, and seizing Donna Elvira by the hand, she drew her towards her, and throwing her arms round her neck, she exclaimed:—

"God bless thee, then, and make you both happy!"

But the last word was scarcely audible, and perhaps, before it had entirely passed her lips, her spirit received in Heaven the reward of a victory the most arduous woman can ever achieve over herself, of a pardon the most magnanimous the human heart can ever bestow.

Her arms still flung around Elvira's neck, gradually relaxed their hold, and Ginevra's body fell upon the bed.

In a single instant, her countenance took the stamp and the color of the dead; the two maidens saw it, and screamed together. The friar remained a few moments breathless, and then, clasping his hands, exclaimed, "This is the image of heaven!" And then all three knelt and prayed for the repose of that wearied spirit which had merited it so well. They composed her hands upon her breast, and the friar, placing in her fingers the cross he wore at his girdle, set a lamp at her feet, and said, requiescat in pace. Inwardly praying now for her, and again bowing, as if to demand her intercession as a soul that seemed to him safely landed in glory, he led the two maidens forth from the mournful chamber, and returning to the side of the couch of the dead he there passed the rest of the night in prayer.

One of the principle motives of Gonzales in yielding his consent to the challenges between the Spanish and the French, and the French and the Italians, had been to gain time for the arrival of the succors he was awaiting from Spain, by sea; for, deprived of their aid, he had been so inferior in force to the enemy, he had been obliged to fortify himself within the walls of Barletta, without daring to risk any important engagement.

But, in the course of the day, the French baron saw his guests. He had received letters, announcing to him the immediate arrival of a fleet of succors, and as they had already passed Cape Reggio, they could not long delay their arrival at Barletta. Knowing, therefore, the great struggle was fast approaching, and that he ought not to suffer the chivalry, so lately kindled in his army, to be damped by the arrival of fresh troops, he managed, by adroitly alluding to the subject with the Duke de Nemours and the other French officers, to persuade them to come to the combat the earliest day possible. It was, accordingly, decided that the Spaniards should fight the day after the banquet in an open field, on the sea-shore, half a

mile out of the gate which leads to Barri, and the Italians the third day in a field which had already been surveyed and chosen by Brancaleone and Prospero Colonna, near the borgo of Quarato, half way from Barletta to the French camp.

The knights of the two parties, informed of this decision by their respective leaders, were occupied in preparing for battle. The French, who were to take the field, left the ball and returned to the camp, before their companions, to get everything ready for the following day; and the Spaniards retiring in the same manner, each to his own lodgings, to make the necessary preparations as soon as possible, and snatch a few hours of repose before morning. Inigo and Brancaleone heard the news, after having borne Ginevra to the chamber where she was to die, and were on the way to the friar. The former—who was one of the combatants—had been obliged to leave his companions the care of Fieramosca, while he went to make his own preparations. The two friends pressed each other by the hands, as Inigo said—

"How will he be able to take the field the day after to-mor-

row, when he cannot to night stand upon his feet?"

Brancaleone made no reply, but shook his head as he bit his under lip, and showed by the expression of his face, that he felt all the force of the Spaniard's words. He turned away, and going down to the water, entered a boat, anxious to reach the convent as quick as possible to inform Ettore, as he had promised, of the result of their search.

But before we tell how he found the friend he had left in such distress, we must, anticipate what took place the following morning, and narrate the conclusion of the Spaniard's

challenge.

The sun had been up an hour, when the two companies, of eleven men-at-arms, on either side, took the field. Among the Spaniards, Inigo, Azevedo, Correa, old Segredo, and Don Garcia di Paredes, were the most renowned; and the rest, although less known, were brave men-at-arms, and well mounted. Pedro Nasarro had received from Gonzales the charge of umpire. On the side of the French, this station was vested in Monseigneur de la Palipse, who reckoned among his knights, Bajardo, the mirror of chivalry.

For a long time the battle was fought with equal fortune on either side. Segredo's reins had at last, when drawn hard, been severed by the stroke of a sword, and his horse was rushing furiously from the field. This accident, contemplated by the code of duelling, was esteemed a defeat, and he to whom it happened obliged to surrender himself prisoner. The brave old Segredo, seeing his horse about to pass the limits designated by large stakes of wood, threw himself to the ground, and although--through the difficulty of the leap, and, perhaps, because years rendered him less active—he fell upon his knees, yet he still defended himself bravely against two mounted men. But his blade went to pieces, and having no other arms, and seeing it vain to attempt to take refuge among his distant companions, he was forced to surrender and retire from the field. But he had borne himself so gallantly he was applauded and pitied by all.

The fight still went on, and fortune seemed to be turning in favor of the Spaniards. Several Frenchmen's horses had been slain;—and here it is well to advise the reader, that, despite the ancient code of chivalry, it was frequently the custom in these combats to stipulate before hand for the right to wound horses, that the battle might be more like war, where that courtesy was now seldom expected, and increase the peril of the combatants. After two hours of close combat, the umpires ordered the trumpets to sound, and the parties separated for a

brief respite.

The Spaniards were still all mounted, Segredo alone wanting to complete their number. Only one Frenchman had been made prisoner, which left them equal in this respect, but seven of their horses lay dead on the field. Bajardo, however, was still in the saddle. After half an hour of repose, the combat, once more began, and, in spite of the valor of the Spaniards, their enemies still maintained themselves firmly entrenched behind the corpses of their horses, over which those of their adversaries could not be forced by the gashing spur. And thus, after many a useless effort, the French proposed to end the combat, leaving both sides to come off with equal honor

CHAPTER XVIII.

The resolute defence of the French knights, and the difficulty of vanquishing them, secure as they were behind the bodies of their horses, inclined the greater part of the Spaniards to accept their proposal. But Diego Garcia would not give his consent. He fiercely cried out to his companions it was a shame to retreat before men half conquered, and insisted upon bringing matters to an end, to show that the Spaniards were their masters on foot or on horse. Having no arms about him but his sword, with which he could not reach them behind their fortification of horse flesh, he leaped from his horse in rage, and seizing up the large stones which fixed the limits of the arena, and which a man of ordinary strength would have even moved with difficulty, he hurled them into the midst of his antagonists. But they easily dodged the blows, and he found even this resort ineffectual.

Nevertheless, they renewed the combat and it lasted till the sun began to sink in the west. The French kept their ground so bravely, that both sides finally consented to withdraw. The umpires decreed the honor of the day equal, awarding superior valor to the Spaniards, and to the French greater firmness. The two prisoners were exchanged, and all exhausted, worn down, and spiritless, they left the field, one party for the camp and the other for the city.

When the Spaniards entered the town, it was nearly night-fall. They dismounted at the castle, and presenting themselves before Gonzales, related to him the fortunes of the day. The Great Captain was deeply disturbed, and he sternly demanded of them why they had not finished gloriously a day so well begun? At this moment Don Garcia appeared, in all the noble-

ness of his nature. He who had so sharply reproached his companions on the field, for wishing to leave their victory incomplete, now, in the presence of Gonzales, boldly defended them, declaring they had done all it was possible for brave men to do, and accomplished the object for which they went to the field. They had made the French themselves confess they were at least their equals, in the charge of battle, on horse.

But Gonzales unwillingly listened to these excuses, and cut short all further conversation by answering, "Por mejores os embiè yo al campo, I sent you to the battle as their superiors," and dismissed them.

We will now resume the thread of what happened to Brancaleone the evening before, after he left Inigo to return to Fieramosca.

The impatience he felt in the passage to reach St. Ursula as quickly as possible, now subsided when he touched the beach, and began to think how he should announce to Ettore the misfortunes of Ginevra. Slowly he mounted the steps which led to the green plat of the convent; and composing his thoughts, he walked forward to the stranger's house. But the conversation he had prepared was all useless. As he entered the room, he found Zoraide seated at the head of the bed, beckoning him to come still, for Ettore was in a quiet sleep. He drew back slowly as the maiden rose up to cast a glance at Fieramosca. He was sleeping tranquilly, and she went out, on tip-toe, and followed Brancaleone to one of the rooms near by.

"Everything is going on well," said Zoraide; "to-morrow Ettore will be as well as ever. But Ginevra, where is she? Have you found no trace of her yet?"

Brancaleone's breath once more returned into his body, when he heard the good news, and he replied:

"Ginevra is in the castle and in good hands, and you can see her shortly; but tell me, Ettore will really get well? For day after to-morrow the combat comes!"

"Well, let it come!"

A certain mysterious expression which accompanied the words of Zoraide, stimulated Brancaleone's curiosity; and

wishing to know more precisely the nature of the malady of his friend, he was told he had been wounded but slightly in the neck; but Zoraide said nothing of the dagger having been poisoned. Perceiving, however, an unusual expression in the face of the maiden, he continued to question her, but

he succeeded in getting nothing more satisfactory.

"There is a saying with us in the Levant," said Zoraide, playfully smiling, "that a lion of the desert once had his life saved by a mouse. I will say nothing more now. It's enough to tell you, that in a few hours the arm of Ettore Fieramosca will be as strong as the neck of a wild bull. But now, nothing is to be done but to leave him quiet. To-morrow he will wake in time to make all his preparations. I will return to his bed-side, to be ready in case of necessity; trust to me—of the art of healing wounds I am mistress of all the secrets, and I have cured others more dangerous by far than this."

Seeing there was nothing more to be done for his friend, Brancaleone requested Zoraide to quiet Ettore on Ginevra's account as soon as he awoke, to announce the combat was to take place on the day mentioned, and that he would come to him about noon, if he did not himself, before that hour, appear in the city. Everything was arranged between them, and he returned once more to Barletta. Before going to his own house he wished to pass by the castle to learn the state of Ginevra; but he found the gate shut and the draw-bridge raised, and he was obliged to wait till the following morning.

It was hardly day-light when he again went to the castle; but the eleven Spanish knights had already come out of the court-yard, to go to the field, followed by all those who were allowed to attend them, and there were few remaining. He mounted the stair-way without finding a person who could give him any information, till he reached the entrance where he had left Ginevra the evening before. He knocked, and Father Mariano, who had passed the night in the chamber, opened the door, and taking Brancaleone into a neighboring room, related to him what had happened.

This sad news was the more overwhelming to him, for he knew how heavily it would fall upon his friend, and at the mo-

ment, too, when he was the least able to bear it—when he needed all his strength for the approaching battle—and he feared that, sinking under the weight of the blow, he would prove inferior to himself in so great a crisis. Bethinking himself of the remedy, he arranged with the friar to conceal the death of Ginevra through the day, and the day after, he was himself to take charge of conveying the body to the convent, according to her desire, while Ettore was fighting on the field. They believed it would not be difficult to preserve it secret for the day, when the castle was almost deserted, and they determined to communicate it only to Gonzales, that he might furnish the necessary aid in transporting the body, and conducting the funeral with becoming propriety.

As to Fieramosca, to whom they would be obliged to make some explanation, they agreed that Brancaleone should tell him that Ginevra was well, but could not see him that day, and only wished him to remember the honor of Italy, and bear himself on the field with all that heroism the occasion called for; that she would pray for him and his companions in arms—all of which might be said without violating the truth, and they would encourage him to go boldly to the battle-field.

When this all-important affair was arranged, Brancaleone descended to the piazza, and went to the house of the brothers Colonni. He found them both in the court-yard, where the thirteen Italians were gathered, reviewing minutely their arms, and armor, and horses, that nothing might be overlooked that would not stand the proof on the coming day.

Brancaleone, who had been warned of this review, had sent his grooms, and those of Fieramosca, with their horses and arms. But the master of the latter was wanting, and they all replied to each other's interrogations, that they had not seen him, and knew not where he could be.

Prospero Colonna heard this intelligence with surprise, which soon turned into indignation; and when Brancaleone appeared, he asked him with a stern look,

"And where is Fieramosca, who does not appear?"

"Excellency," replied Brancaleone, "he will soon be here—his delay is not voluntary—an unforseen and pressing matter**"

"What can be so important for him as the business of tomorrow? I never would have believed he could think of anything else at such an hour!"

Fanfulla, who thought of the incidents of the previous evening, and wished to give another turn to the conversation, which would allow him to say something, laughingly replied,

"Ah, he must have danced too much, or he has found some new nail to hang the old one on, and then, we all know, to get up too early, sours * * *"

"He'll have found a canker, which may God give thee!" interrupted Brancaleone. "Believest thou, all are mad like thyself? I tell your Excellency, doubt it not, upon my honor, he'll be here shortly. Nay, I'll go myself to hasten his coming."

He thought this the safest course—for although he confided in Zoraide, he feared some new obstacle might hinder him.

Again he took his way to the port to make another visit to the island—he had entered a boat, but at the moment of pushing off, a small skiff shot round the mole, and in it to his great joy he beheld Ettore, who caught his eye at the same moment, and leaping ashore, his first question was—

"Where is Ginevra? is she ill? what has happened to her? come, quick, let us go to her?

"Quick, rather let us go to the Colonni, for they are only waiting only for thee. Ginevra is well, and you will see her afterwards."

"Well, I'm glad, but let us go to see her."

"But has not Zoraide told thee, that to-morrow the combat comes?"

"To-morrow we will fight, but now in the name of God, take me to Ginevra?" * *

"Now thou canst not see her, nor canst thou see her to-day."

"And I tell thee?" * *

"But if thou will not listen to me and let me talk, we shall never finish. * * Know then (and all this is from her, not that I saw her when she said it, but she sent me the message that I might tell it to thee). She is well—Signora Vittoria has been with her, and restored her, treating her with all those kind attentions her case required, and she wants nothing. She

implores you to have no thought for her to-day, nor attempt to see her-that nothing disturb thee, and to-morrow thou conduct thyself on the field in a manner worthy of thyself, that thou remember the honor of Italy, and of all thou hast so often spoken of to her, and that she will pray Heaven to grant us the victory." *

"But, oh! why is it, then, that I may not see her? there is something under all this."

"And I tell thee, there is nothing under all this. If I should try to tell thee everything that took place yesterday, I could not do it for I do n't know myself—but let this satisfy thee, in the name of heaven. For the present thou knowest she 's safe, and when the battle is fought we'll know the rest; this is not the moment to think about it. Let us go-for Signor Prospero and all the company are waiting for thee, and have already asked where thou art, and they wonder what can have taken place—fine time this to absent thyself—come, let us be off. Thou hast always been a man, and yet how little a thing it is that would make thee put honor, and thy own bright name, under thy feet."

"Well, let us go-yes-we'll go," answered Fieramosca, half angry. "I'm not a horse that needs a double spur-I only asked thee to see her a single moment, and one would think

the world was coming to an end for it."

"No, the world will go on-but canst thou understand they've all been there a full hour under review-thou alone

art wanting-what will they think?"

"Well, then a little faster if you like," replied Fieramosca, quickening his pace—for all this conversation had taken place as they walked slowly, one pulling towards the castle, and the other towards the house of the Colonna, "let us lose no more time—thou art right—duty and honor before all."
"As they walked rapidly on, Barcaleone asked him:

"Well, then, a-propos, how dost thou feel? and the wound?"

"Oh! it's nothing, but I'll tell thee afterwards—for now we have no time-what infernal plots, and that poor Zoraide!she would not tell me anything, but I understood it all from the pain I felt, the dagger must have been poisoned-and I would not have desired her to suck from the wound—but I owe her health, and perhaps life * * yes, I'm almost certain that's the way it all happened. But I was so out of my head, that I can't tell if this be the recollection, or if it were all a dream."

"Well, thou art restored?" * *

"As perfectly as though nothing had happened."

At this moment, they entered the court-yard, and presented themselves before Prospero Colonna, who dropped a word about Fieramosca's tardiness, and then resumed his important engagement.

His examination was so careful, it lasted several hours. The horses were tried, the armor proved by strokes of lances, battle-axes and swords. The offensive weapons were tried on wood and iron, and all that could not stand the proof were thrown aside. About noon the review finished, and all retired to their lodgings except Ettore, who was detained under the pretext of arranging various items of the challenge, but in reality to prevent him from going away, to follow his own inclination. Brancaleone had taken Signor Prospero aside, and told him all that had happened, and begged him to keep Ettore occupied the rest of the day, and his request was literally regarded. When night came, and no other reasonable pretext remained to detain him, he was dismissed, and attended to his house by Brancaleone who entered into conversation upon the profession of arms, and the manner in which they were to meet their antagonists the following morning, and he succeeded so well in fixing his attention, that Ettore's fancy was entirely diverted from the subject which filled his heart.

As they crossed the piazza, the troop of the Spanish horse came up, and in asking and hearing the news of the day, time wore away till night shut in, and they retired to their lodgings.

"Those Frenchmen are tough-boned devils," said Ettore, as he separated from his friend, "and the Spaniards have found flesh for their teeth."

"So much the better," answered Brancaleone, "we shall have men to deal with; we do n't follow the banners of Colonna for nothing. For myself, I hope to do the duty of two men to-

morrow—think! what would not those ribald Orsini say, if they could hear we were worsted! That poltroon, Count di Pitighiano, would like a good laugh; but for this time I think

he'll not have the pleasure."

"Oh! no," replied Fieramosca, "and who knows but more than one of these Frenchmen will smart for trying to get a taste of the figs of Puglia! But we must think about getting a few hours rest, and to-morrow we'll try to show them that man for man, we neither fear them, nor the whole world. Adieu, Brancaleone. I know what thou wouldst say," he continued, laughing, "fear not, but till to-morrow night I'll not think of anything but the business in hand, and I swear to you that my blood boils this minute as it did not on the day the challenge came, and I hope I'll not be the man to bring dishonor upon Italy or you."

"Of this I am more than certain," rejoined Brancaleone

"To-morrow," added Fieramosca, pressing his hand, and

the two knights separated.

Before mounting to his chamber, Fieramosca thought he would take a glance at his stall, and going in he began to caress his good battle-horse, with that kind feeling, and I might say affection, which every soldier feels for the companion of his fatigues and his dangers. He stroked his mane and lightly patted his shoulders, and the steed, bending back his ears, shook his head and playfully pretended to bite his master.

"Poor Airone, my good fellow, eat, and make good wax whilst thou canst, for thou art not sure of sleeping to-morrow night on this litter. For any other day I'd take out Boccanera (black-mouth), and not risk thy skin, but to-morrow I must have thee under me, for I know thou wilt not take a false step."

And then, with a smile, he took his nose in his hands.

"Thou, too, art an Italian, and thou too, ought to be a crusader."

He saw everything was in order. "Masuccio," said ne, turning to his groom, "at four let him drink, and then give him all the oats his body can hold, and at five, come and assist me in arming."

After giving these orders he went to his champer, and in a

few minutes he extinguished his light, and got into his bed with a firm purpose of reposing himself to slumber. At first he felt like sleep, but there came one thought, and then another, and still another, and two hours passed before he succeeded in closing his eyes a single moment. The fate of Ginevra, whose story as related by Brancaleone had given him some consolation, now rose once more on his fancy with all its shadows and suspicions. A thousand uncertain fears crowded around his heart.

"What," thought he, "can all this mystery mean, and I am not even to know to-morrow. Oh! Brancaleone, can it be thou wilt deceive me?"

A moment more and in his heart he would have cursed this challenge, but he spurned the thought from him, with contempt, before it was formed.

"Oh! shame, shame!" he exclaimed, as he sat up in bed, "how can such a vile idea enter my soul! Am I no longer the man I was? What would Ginevra say to see me so changed, and so cold to thoughts that once made all my veins run with fire?"

Such reflections so enraged him against himself that he leaped furiously from his bed, and finding he could not lie there he dressed himself and went out on the terrace. He sat down, as he used to, upon the low wall under the palm tree, and waited for the twilight of morning which was not far off.

The pale waning moon hardly mirrored itself on the sea. Distant perhaps five hundred paces on the left rose up the castle, which, scarcely visible at that hour in its outlines, seemed a vast dingy pile, shooting up its dim battlements from the summit of the great towers into the pale sky. Ettore sighed as he gazed on those walls which held all he cared for on earth, and occasionally he fancied he heard coming from a distance the murmur of alternate chanting, but so faint that while it seemed so, still it did not.

At a window on the wing of the castle, of which he had only a side view, a light was burning, and it burned on all the night. He would have given his blood to see it extinguished, and turning his eyes away he exclaimed, "I am mad to torment myself with such fancies," but he could not help turning his eyes towards that window, and that light was always there!

With that species of insincerity which man so often practices on himself when harrassed by a perplexing thought, he tried to persuade himself of what he did not at all believe in the bottom of his heart—that Ginevra was well, that nothing evil had overtaken her, and that all the mystery that hung over the affair was the working of his own wild fancy. And if he still kept on trying to deceive himself, he did so because he knew how essential to his success it was that he should convince himself at least in some measure, that his apprehensions were all the work of his imagination that he might concentrate all the thoughts and all the powers of his soul upon the approaching struggle.

"Ah! yes, yes," he said, shaking his head and running his hand over his forehead and through his hair, as if to dissipate the fancies that crowded on his brain, "let us, first of all, think of our honor * * * and who knows but to-morrow, at this hour, I shall have already borne to Ginevra the joyful news, we've conquered;" and, then, stopping short a moment—" and yet, she may see me borne into Barletta on my bier, and say: 'Poor

Ettore, thou hast done all thou could'st.'

"And yet, what if this does happen? I shall have died the death of a brave man, and she would weep over my tomb; but she would not wish me to live with the loss of my honor. Nay, she would be proud to say: 'We were friends from our child-hood' * * yes * but still she will be left here alone, without help—she knows not even that her husband is here, in the French camp; and even did she know it, how could she present herself before him after so long a time?"

Ettore had formed and partly executed the purpose of recommending her to Brancaleone; but, when he thought that he, too, might fall in battle, he resolved to write a letter to Prospero Colonna, to order that his small property in Capua, his house, his farm, his armor, and his horses, which were worth some thousands of ducats, should all be given to Maria Ginevra

Rossi di Monreale. He struck a light, and in a short time the letter was written. He then thought of enclosing it in one to Ginevra, to bid her farewell, and recommend to her care the young Saracen, to whom he had so good reason to be grateful. The cocks were already crowing, and he heard his men at work in the stall below—he saw his time was short, and he

wrote only these few lines:

"Ginevra, I am just mounting my steed, and I know not if I shall dismount this evening alive. If heaven has decreed that I fall, I doubt not, that after shedding a few tears over him, who, from his childhood, was thy friend and thy servant so faithful, thou wilt rejoice that I have met a death the most glorious and the most beautiful in the world. Thou wilt please accept the little estate I leave-thou knowest I have no obligations, and no near relatives. I only recommend to thee, in a single word, my faithful Masuccio, who, from the day when at Ofanto he received that wound in his shoulder, could be of little use to me, but he would run the risk, without thy help, of being obliged to beg in God's name, which would be a stigma upon my memory. One thing more I must tell thee. Thy hushand is serving under the banner of the Duke de Nemours.-I have no more time.—The signal awaits me in the court-yard of Colonna.-God bless thee.-I recommend to thee also, Zoraide." ETTORE.

At that moment he heard the short, broken blasts of the trumpet, preparatory to sounding the reveillée, a murmuring noise coming up from the ground-floor of his own and neighboring houses—indistinct voices and steps of men and horses in the streets, indicated that the greater part of those who were to be actors or spectators of the struggle, had begun to put themselves in motion; but no sign of morning could yet be seen on the sky—a mist was spread over the heavens which shut out the stars.

Fieramosca, who was sitting by the side of the open window closing his two letters, observed it as he looked out a moment where the diverging rays of his candle illuminated the track of mist it penetrated. The forbidding appearance of the weather increased the sadness that already hung over him. The bats that flitted rapidly by the window, attracted by the light, the lugubrious cry of the sentinels on the towers of the castle, as the time came for changing the guard, all made the hour more gloomy; and, for a moment, the struggling young knight was completely subdued. But the heavy tread of the men mounting the stair-way to enter his room, drove all sadness from his brow, and he wore as bright and gay a look as possible, that his gloom might not be discovered.

Brancaleone appeared, all covered with armor except his head, attended by Masuccio, who bore the mail of Fieramosca. The bell of S. Dominico sounded for the mass the combatants were about to hear before they started for the field.

"Arm thyself, Ettore—in a few moments they will all be before the altar," said Brancaleone; and with the help of Masuccio, he had soon robed his friend in the burnished, beautiful mail he only wore on the greatest occasions. Made by one of the best artisans of Milan, it was so well fitted to the beautiful limbs of the young knight, and so skilfully knit at the joints, that it followed the contour of his body without diminishing the gracefulness of his proportions in a single point, leaving him, at the same time, perfectly free in all his movements.

Completely covered in mail, with his sword hung to his left side, and his poinard to the right, he descended with his companion, followed by their servants, bearing their lances, helmets, and shields; and leading their battle-horses. They reached the Church of S. Dominico, where the thirteen champions and Prospero Colonna, were all soon assembled with a crowd who gathered to witness the spectacle.

The church was a quadrangle, with three naves separated by columns and acute arches of the rudest style; and near the main altar two side wings extended, which formed a cross of the principal part of the building. The choir of the friars, placed, in the ancient style, before the altar, was of wood, with stalls divided by ornamented work in *relievo*, to which age had given a dark, lucid appearance. In the centre stood a bench which could accommodate thirteen persons, and here were gathered the Italian combatants.

Daylight was advancing, but it was not yet strong enough to penetrate the painted glass of the narrow windows, and nearly the whole of the church was still dark, for the feeble light of the scattered tapers around the altar only glanced, in vibrating rays, from the knights' corslets, leaving their figures almost invisible.

Prospero Colonna, in his armor, stood just before them, and at his feet was lying a rich kneeling cushion of crimson velvet, with the "Colonna" embroidered in silver, borne there by two pages, who were standing a few steps behind him.

The mass began, celebrated by the friar Mariano, and not a heart among the spectators capable of lofty and generous feelings, gazed unaffected upon the spectacle of those bold and brave young knights who bowed before the God of armies, their brows furrowed by steel and by hardship, to implore Heaven to crown with victory the swords to be lifted that day against an enemy who would cover with dishonor the Italian name.

In their movements, to which a long use of arms had given, even in prayer, a proud air of victory, they still showed that they were conscious they were bowing before Heaven. Last of all, on the left, stood Fieramosca, immovable, with his arms folded across his breast. A few paces before him was the door of the Sacristy, open, and the persons attached to the church, who were passing back and forth in their various duties, would perhaps have been sufficient of themselves to distract his mind from prayer; but besides this, a conversation and another spectacle contributed more than ever, at that moment, to arrest his painful reflections.

A man dressed in a dark torn mantle, with tangled red hair, and a face of suspicious look, was standing still between him and the Sacristy. Turning to a Dominican friar, whose corpulency filled a huge leathern chair from arm to arm, which constituted the entire furniture of the place, he demanded of him, in a hoarse, rough voice—

"Which am I to prepare, that for the poor or for the rich?"

"Fine question," replied the friar, moving no part of his body but his tongue; "knowest thou not that Signor Gonzales

pays the expense? It's none of these starved wretches of Barletta, whom they cart off as beggars, to get rid of giving tapers to the curate. * * Of the first class—I've already told thee once all about it—of the first class, bells, litter, and chant-

ed mass-you seem to be unusually stupid to-day."

The other shrugged his shoulders, and going to one side of the Sacristy, disappeared from the sight of Fieramosca; but the latter heard him put a key into a lock and open a door. Soon after he heard retreating steps, and a silence of a few moments followed. After a brief interval, he heard the same steps returning, with a sliding noise, as of something dragged upon the floor, which continued till the same man appeared, drawing a black bier woven in silver, with a cross at the head, and at the feet a skull supported by two bones in the form of the cross of St. Andrew. After shaking from it the dust, he threw it upon a large spread of black velvet. While the undertaker was performing this office with that careless and insensible manner too often seen in the attendants of the Sacristy, a bright idea seemed to find its way far enough into his brain to raise a grin upon the skin that covered the bones of his cheeks.

"So there will be something to drink even for me, this time? It's many a day since I've had any of this work but for sailors and fishermen * * thank God, now and then we do catch some of these big fe—" * * (here he suddenly turned around, with a timely glance, as though he feared he was overheard, and lowering his voice continued)—" some of these big fellows."

"Every one has his time once," said the friar, cutting his

speech in two by a deep yawn.

"And it may be—" the undertaker went on adjusting the spread upon the bier, and stepping aside to see if it hung equally on both sides—" it may be that Beca, that witch, my wife, prophesied right. Last night (hear this) we were in bed and talking about our condition, and having nothing to do, and that the woman's night-gown and the new shirt I made out to get with the money I fished for in the plague, had come to pieces. * * And now see if it be true,"

(he stripped up his sleeves to his elbows, to prove the truth of his assertion). "And we finally concluded that if we keep on so a little longer, we shall die of starvation. Then this morning, before the Ave Maria, while I was getting up to come to the church, 'Oh, Rosso,' says she, 'do you know I've had a dream? 'Well,' says I, 'what did you dream?' 'I dreamed,' says she, 'that the kitchen of Veleno's Inn was filled with beds, and the host, yellow, yellow, the first one, and in fact,' says she, 'the plague had come back again and we were made, and you went round Barletta dressed like a knight.' In fact, as you say, friar Biagio, in war and in pestilence we are here—and it may be before evening—" (here he dropped his voice again, and seeing that no one in the church was looking at him, he pointed with his finger over his shoulder towards the thirteen knights), "it may be that some of these will come home on four feet." * *

The friar, either through inattention or to maintain the rights of the hierarchy, took no pains to reply, and the dialogue stopped. When the undertaker had put everything in order he disappeared, and the bier was left standing in the midst of the Sacristy. It did not occur to Fieramosca, and had even a suspicion flashed upon his mind for whom it had been prepared he would have banished it as the thought of a mad man, but still he could not draw his eyes from it till mass was over.

His thoughts naturally centered upon the idea that perhaps that day might be his last, and he turned his spirit fervently to God once more, to pray for the pardon of all his sins. His memory ran over all his life, from the hour he bore Ginevra from St. Cecilia, and he felt no other remorse than having concealed from her that Grajano was still living. For this, however, as for all his other sins, he had confessed himself to God the evening before. He felt that he could tranquilly meet death.

The mass was done; the thirteen knights left the church, following Prospero Colonna to his house, where they took some refreshment to prepare themselves for the battle.

Among the articles of agreement between the Italian and

French combatants, there was one which stipulated that every man-at-arms who was made prisoner could, without being obliged to follow his conqueror, immediately re-mount on the payment of an hundred ducats. Each Italian deposited his money with Signor Prospero, and the thirteen hundred ducats placed in sacks were loaded upon mules sent on ahead to carry provisions, and forage, and all that might be necessary at the camp.

After breakfast they all went to the castle, where the Great Captain awaited them in the banquet hall. He took his leave of them in few words, with, a serene countenance, and when he parted with the company he told them he would wait for them at supper, and have twenty-six covers laid, so that if the French happened to forget to carry their ransom money with them, they might not be obliged to go to bed hungry.

They then descended into the court-yard, where their horses were drawn up in a line, held by the grooms. They mounted and rode off two by two, preceded by the heralds, and attended

by a multitude of friends and a crowd of spectators.

CHAPTER XIX.

At an equal distance from Barletta and the French camp where the plain stretching towards the hills begins to ascend, a level spot opens between the adjacent elevations, formed probably by some ancient alluvion, covering an area of three hundred paces on every side. The ground is composed of the finest gravel and silicious sands, hardened by time, and bare of shrubs and herbs, affording a sure and sound footing for tramping horses. This was the spot chosen for the combat.

A company of men sent forward by both parties the day before had levelled all the unevenness of the surface. limits had been drawn by a furrow, with large stones set up at equal distances, and under the shadow of a cluster of large holm trees which overlooked the entire field, seats had been prepared for the judges under a kind of tent formed of white and red stripes attached to the branches of the trees above. Before this tribunal twenty-six lances had been planted in plain sight, with the shield of the knights of both nations, with their names inscribed in large letters upon a parchment. Curiosity had gathered, from all the neighboring villages and villas, a vast crowd of peasants and country gentlemen who had reached the ground and taken their posts on the surrounding elevations long before sunrise. These who made pretensions to some rank sat with the old men, and the women upon the grass, while the rest, such as boys, beggars, and thieves climbed up into the trees, and when seen here and there through the foliage their faces and clothes offered a broad contrast to the green leaves around them.

It was a beautiful spectacle, especially to one who stood on

the land side and looked off towards the sea-the glance of a scene so rich in rural loveliness all enlivened by a vast multitude filled with so much enthusiasm and gladness. On the right immense masses of holm-oaks, reared themselves towards heaven, their deep rich green enlivened by the lighter and gayer coloring of smaller trees. Upon a plain still more distant in the back ground, the borgo of Quarato, whose gate defended by a tower (the only objects of the town visible), surmounted with battlements with the road winding beneath them; in the midst of all, the field of battle beyond, the shore of the Adriatic, the city and the castle of Barletta, and the colored forms of the edifices rising from the blue sea. Beyond still, the bridge and the Island of St. Ursula, the tall peaks of the Gargano, and the line of the horizon. On the left, the hills rising above each other and opposite to the place destined to the judges upon an undulating ground, covered with green grass clusters of lofty oaks, their trunks clothed with ivy in the full vigor of the most luxuriant vegetation.

The night mist unfolded by the breeze of the morning went waiving into the higher regions of the air in clouds of fantastic forms, and already struck by the sun they flashed his golden beams. Other streaks of denser fog were still lightly resting upon the bosom of the plain, like beds of the whitest cotton, through which rose here and there clumps of lofty trees, or crests of hillocks. The disc of the sun just ready to burst from the sea sent up his golden light through the heavens, leaving every object on earth ungilded but by the reflection from the sky.

The vast company assembled all turned their eyes involuntarily towards the spot where he was to appear. On the distant verge of the sea at last flashed a burning spark, it grew, it took a form, and the majestic sun came rushing up like a globe of fire, scattering fields of light, giving form and color to everything, and redoubling his own glory in the undulations of the sea.

A company of infantry that had arrived early kept the area cleared of people who were dispersed in groups around, con-

gregated, for the most part, in places where the sellers of commestibles and wine had pitched their tents and raised benches and tables. Amongst this company was to be reckoned Veleno, the host of the inn, already well known to the reader. He had planted in one of the positions which commanded the best view of the field, his ambulating depôt, under an arbor, where multitudes of his old military customers had already assembled. Two or three hugh frying pans were over the fire on as many portable iron furnaces; a table made of rude boards, laid together, after a fashion, upon several stakes stuck into the ground to serve for legs, was covered with hugh dishes of fish, artichokes, and every kind of vegetables for frying.

With two aprons and a cap neatly washed, and his shirt-sleeves rolled up to his shoulders, he held under his arm the flour box, in one hand the plate with the frying piece still raw, and with the other the fork to take it out, and he was busy in preparing to cook this dish so grateful to the southern Italians, without stopping for a single moment his chattering, laughing, asking and answering questions in the same hreath, and only interupting these dialogues from time to time to sing la bella Franchescina, or to cry up what he then held in his hand. Ah, what anchovies! Ah! what anchovies. These little mullets are jumping alive! Oh! have you no eyes, or have you no money?" And many other similar appeals to his bystanders which might have been heard half a mile off.

At last a loud murmur from the multitude who occupied the higher places called the attention of everybody in that direction and passing from mouth to mouth the news went on that the French banner could be seen in the distance. A few minutes after it appeared at a turning of the road as it wound round from under a hill, and advancing the line reigned up in the order of battle on the upper side of the field, with their faces towards the sea. The knights dismounted with about an hundred and fifty companions and friends who had attended them, and leaving their horses with the grooms they advanced to the seat of the judges and dispersed themselves under the trees awaiting the arrival of the Italians.

On the road to Barletta a cloud of dust, through which was

soon distinguished the flashing of arms, showed that they were not likely to tire the patience of their enemies. The crowd till now dispersed, drew up around the limits of the list, each one trying to get in the front ranks, in spite of the infantry guard, who, with those amiable courtesies for which the military have in all ages been so distinguished, struck upon the ground and sometimes upon the toes the heels of their pikes and partisans to drive back the wave which crowded upon them.

The Italians arrived and halted in front of their adversaries in the same order, and dismounting advanced also to the seat of the judges. After mutual salutations and the interchange of courtesies Sig. Prospero, and Bajardo, the two umpires conversed together and decided that first of all the judges should

be drawn by lot.

The reader will be astonished I 'm sure, to find that the famous Bajardo is not numbered among the combatants on so important an occasion, and to find him filling the office of umpire. We will then tell him that we have felt no less surprise, for the same reason, nor can we form any other conjecture than that some wound not entirely healed prevented him from bearing arms, or that perhaps the fever he was suffering under at the time had so wasted his strength—but certain it is, we do know he was not numbered among the champions of that day.

The names of several military chieftains were accordingly written, from the Spaniards, the French and the Italians in equal number. The papers were rolled up and thrown into a shield and the lot fell upon Fabrizio Colonna, Obigni and Diego Garcia di Parades who ascended the platform raised for the judges, where they opened upon a table the book of the Evangelist and read the oaths to the twenty six warriors, by which they swore to resort to no unfair means in battle, declaring they bore no charms about their bodies nor their arms, and that they came to the trial relying solely upon their courage and natural strength. The stipulations agreed upon were again read in a loud voice, which accorded to each one the privilege of ransoming himself, his arms, and his horse, on the payment of one hundred ducats. One of the Italians emptied upon the table a sack of money they had brought.

It was counted and consigned to the judges. It was expected the French would do the same. Seeing that no one came forward Prospero Colonna said to them, as courteously as possible,

"And where is your ransom, Sir Knights?"

La Motte stepped forward, and replied with a laugh, "Signor Prospero, see if this will not be enough." The ire of the Roman Baron was deeply stirred at this ill-timed boasting, but he curbed his spirit, and only replied—

"Before selling the skin, the bear must be killed. But never mind; and although it was one of our stipulations that the ransom should be brought, yet we will not, on this account,

throw any obstacles in the way of the battle."

"Signori," he added, turning to his countrymen, "you heard? This knight seems to think the case already decided: it rests with you to show him his mistake"

It would be needless to say, that this insult made the blood of the Italians boil. But no reply was made to Signor Prospero or La Motte but a smile of contempt, or a flashing glance of vengeance.

When these preliminaries were over, the two parties were dismissed by the judges, and half an hour given them to make their preparations. At the expiration of the time, a trumpeter, on horseback, under one of the trees at the side of the tribunal,

would give three blasts, as the signal for the charge.

The combatants returned to their steeds, and mounted the saddle, drawn up by their masters in a file, each one being four paces from the other. Colonna and Bajardo both examined once more the curbs, the girths of the saddles, the buckles, and the joints of the coats of mail; and if there were men in either army accustomed to such work they were the men.

When this review was done Signor Prospero reined up his

horse in front of the line and spoke in a loud voice-

"Signori! think not I would address you a single word to fire the spirits of such men to battle. I behold among your number Lombards, Neapolitans, Romans, Sicilians; but you are all equally sons of Italy. Let the honor of the victory be equally divided betwen you! You see before you the stranger who has proclaimed that the Italians are cowards! I only tell you one thing—you see there that viliain traitor, Grajano d'Asti; he fights to cover the heads of his own countrymen with infamy! You understand me! See that he goes not from this field alive!"

Fieramosca, who was near Brancaleone, said to him, in a suppressed voice—"Ah! if a vow did not bind my hands!" Brancaleone replied—"Leave him to me—L've no vows—I know where to bring the blow!"

The desire to kill Grajano had been begotten in him from the day he first heard the adventures of his friend, and now he saw he might annihilate the obstacle which stood between him and Ginevra. Hearing afterwards he was to be one of the French champions, he knew he should not lack the opportunity of executing his wish; and the reader will not have forgotten, that while the Astian knight was arming himself in the armory-tent near the arena, on the day of the tournament, Brancaleone had gained some useful information. Now, the unforeseen death of Ginevra had annihilated his first thought—but he did not abandon his purpose; and he had been still more fired by the words of Signor Prospero, whom, as the head of the Colonna party, he implicitly obeyed.

In the meantime, the two masters of the field retired to their posts—Bajardo to the side of the judges, and Colonna to the shade of the oaks. The latter, all armed but his head, upon a large black steed covered with a vermillion saddle-cloth, embroidered with gold, raised his stern and lofty brow towards his countrymen, silently awaiting the trumpet call. He had at his side a beautiful young page of sixteen, dressed in light blue, with stockings of carmine, and various lieutenants of the army, in different attitudes, who, although they did not move,

seemed to wear a bold and martial bearing.

As the moment drew near, the silence became so general that only a monosylable, half suppressed, of those who stood next to them, could be heard. During this stillness, which gave the assembly an imposing and solemn aspect, the pawing and neighing of horses broke in from time to time; for they had

been stalled and high fed, and unable to stand quiet in the line, they were champing their long gilded bits, which they had covered with foam, arching their necks and tails, and rearing back upon their hind feet, snorting through their distended nostrils, red as blood, while their eyes seemed to flash sparks of fire.

In our times, it is difficult to form an idea of the martial aspect of a man-at-arms of that age, all covered in steel, himself and his steed. Every knight, with his visor down, cased in mail, with his shield on his breast, and his lance on his thigh, forked to his saddle, whose iron-plated bows rose up before and behind, like two walls of defence, rendering it almost impossible for him to fall—thus planted, as he pressed in his knees, he was so entirely blended with his horse that all their movements were in such perfect union it seemed to personify the two natures of the Centaur.

The fronts and sides of the horses' heads were defended by plates of iron, which left no openings but holes for the eyes; in the centre of the forehead a point of steel; the neck, shoulders and breast equally protected with a massive mail, wrought in the form of scales, which left free all his movements, and a coat of mail, of the same description, covered the rump and the sides of the belly, leaving only two openings below for the rider's spurs. The beautiful proportions of these noble animals were so disfigured by these masses of armor, that, from the legs up, they seemed so many rhinosceroses. Seen standing, it would have been thought impossible, not only for them to run, but to move; but a jerk of the bridle or a touch of the spur, found them as nimble and ready as though they had been uncovered, so skilfully was their armor fitted.

Besides the lance, sword and poniard, which every combatant bore upon his person, there hung from the saddle-bow a mace of steel and a battle-axe. In the use of these weapons of death, the Italians were renowned. The manner of ornamenting themselves varied with each one's fancy; over their helmets floated plumes of many colors, gathered, generally, around a long stem, formed by the tail of the peacock. Several, instead of plumes, wore silk fringes, called by the French

l'ambrequins: one wore a short cape, another a shoulder-belt, and those whose armor was rich and beautifully worked, left it uncovered. Even the horses had plumes, or some other ornaments, upon their heads, and the bridles, nearly a palm in width, festooned and of the gayest colors; and these ornaments were often of immense value. Upon their shields, besides the designs they usually bore, the Italians had inscribed mottoes fitting the occasion. That of Fieramosca, to cite one only, was—Quid possit pateat saltem nunc Itala virtus.

At last a herald rode forward to the centre of the field, and forbade, in a loud voice, all there gathered from daring to favor or discourage either of the two contending parties, by actions, words, or gestures, and then returned to the tribunal. The trumpet wound the first blast—the second—and a gnat flying would have broken the silence—a third was given—the knights, with a simultaneous movement, slacked their reins, bent over the necks of their steeds, and planting their spurs, they first reared together and then dashed forward, both sides charging at the same moment, as the cry, viva Italia on one side, and vive la France from the other, rung through the air and rolled over the sea.

About one hundred and fifty paces were to be passed before they met. The dust began to rise, and rolled up till a dense mass covered the advancing squadrons, even before they came together, and shut out the view of the combatants; but the shock was heard of horse against horse, and knights shivering lances against the shields and cuirasses of their adversaries, like the crash of a tumbling mass of rocks rushing from a precipice, unimpeded at first, down a steep declivity, till it strikes among heavy trees, rending and sweeping to ruin all that stops its dreadful progress. The vast anxious multitude thus lost the sight of the first encounter; for through that confused, dust-enveloped mass of men and horses, all they could distinguish was the flashing of arms, struck by the beams of the sun, and pieces of plumes, torn off in the fury of the shock, as they whirled above the confusion, and were borne off by the breeze. The crash resounded through all the neighboring vallies. Diego Garcia struck his fist upon his thigh with astonishment, half mad he was not himself, too, in the midst of the combatants. This was the only movement visible throughout the breathless, wonder-stricken crowd.

For a few seconds that group of battle was unbroken, and an indistinct flashing here and there through the dusty cloud, showed that the knights were brandishing their swords, and a clashing of steel was heard as though the hammers of a score of forges had been suddenly set playing. The whole mass full of lurid light, sparkling like fire, resembled some dreadful engine of fire partially veiled in its own smoke. So complicated and so rapid were its movements, opening and shutting, and whirling in its fearful evolutions.

Such was the anxiety to catch some glance, and to know who was first victorious, that a cry seemed ready to burst from the excited multitude, and an irrepressible murmur was heard along the lines; but it was stifled by the signals of the heralds, and the sight of a horse without a rider, rushing wildly from the combat, so entirely covered with dust that the color of his saddle could not be distinguished. He ran round the area at a broken gallop, dragging the torn reins of his bridle, first under one foot and then the other, which jerked down his head as he stepped and nearly brought him to the ground. A deep wound across the shoulder was pouring out a flowing stream of black blood, which marked every track he made. After a few more steps he fell, fainting, upon one knee, and rolled upon the ground. He was then recognized as one of the French rider's.

In the meantime the fight went on—hand to hand, two to two—the cleaving strokes fell; advancing or retreating to gain the advantage, the centre of the struggle spreading from the spot where the first shock was made. The wind swept the dust away, and left a clear view of the combatants. The unhorsed knight was Martellini de Lambris. To the misfortune of the Frenchman, Fanfulla was his antagonist, and with that mad fury, so full, however, of courage and peril, he drove his lance full against his visor, which hurled him his full length upon the ground, and made him test the softness of the earth. Fanfulla had made one of his *fine strokes*, and his voice was heard high and clear above the din of battle—"There's one." Then

perceiving Larlotte near by, who had lost a stirrup under a stroke of Fieramosca, he continued—"Ducats won't do—money is too mean for him." And as the fight opened, he said to the vanquished knight—"Thou art my prisoner." But he leaped upon his feet and answered with a thrust, which glanced from the polished cuirass of the Lodi knight. Not a second passed before the broad sword of Fanfulla, wielded with both hands, fell on the helmet of his foe, who—staggered by the first shock—reeled on his feet, and then followed another, and yet another blow.—Fanfulla cried out—"Money won't do,—won't do,—won't do, and the desperation with which the blows fell made him utter the words with that sort of tearing emphasis we hear from the centre of a huge log, when the rending blows split it open

His enemy could not, with all his skill, ward off the tempest of blows; he came to the ground half stunned, but he would not listen to a surrender. Fanfulla, exasperated beyond measure, gave him the last stroke just as he was rising upon his

knee, and it laid him immoveable upon the sand.

'Satisfied now?" he asked.

Bajardo, seeing he would be butchered uselessly, sent forward a knight-at-arms, who struck his baton to the ground between the two combatants, and cried with a loud voice—"Martellini de Lambris, prisonnier." Several men ran to his help, and raising him up brought him to Signor Prospero.

"God bless thy hand;" cried out the latter to the victor. And he consigned to the charge of his sergeants the French baron, who would not allow them to remove his helmet, but threw himself upon the ground at the foot of an oak, where he

lay silent and immoveable.

Fanfulla had already turned his horse off on a slow gallop, to mingle once more in the battle. He looked round to find a good chance to help on the work, as he rode on, whirling for mere diversion his sword in the air, like a hand-mill, an exercise in which he bore the most skilful and rapid hand in the army. Casting a general glance over the fight, he saw that fortune seemed little inclined towards the enemy, and that the Italians were doing their duty. He then raised his voice louder

than ever, calling La Motte by name, beginning once more his taunt, "Money won't do;" and he hummed these three words to an air, then sung in the streets by the blind. So that the air of the knight, riding in his own bizarre and dare-devil style, that wonderful play of his sword, and yet a pastime for him, the peculiar tone of his voice, all gave to that song so indescribably humorous a character, that it even disturbed the gravity of Signor Prospero, and he could not suppress a momentary smile.

During this time, Ettore Fieramosca had hurled La Motte from his stirrups, but he did not unhorse him. He was a man of power and valor, unlike Fanfulla's prisoner. Fieramosca, jealous of the honor won by the knight of Lodi, had begun to use his blade, in such a manner, that the despiser of the Italians, with all his skill, could not but with difficulty bear up against him. The insults offered to him the evening of the supper, when he declared that a French man-at-arms would not deign to have an Italian for a stable-boy, all rushed back on Fieramosca's memory as he bore down on him with thrusts and parries unriveting and splitting the armor of his adversary, and sometimes wounding him. He scornfully asked—

"At least we know how to use the currycomb. Help thyself—help thyself—for deeds go further than words here."

La Motte could not bear this mockery, and he levelled a blow at his head with such fury that Ettore, unable to break it with his shield, tried to parry it with his sword,—but he failed—it flew into fragments, and the Frenchman's blade falling upon the collar of his breast plate, cleft it through and wounded his shoulder, just above the collar-bone. Fieramosca waited not for the second stroke,—he threw himself under his antagonist, and, clasping him by his arms, tried to drag him to the ground. La Motte dropped his sword, and struggled to unlose his grasp. This was just what Fieramosca wanted,—breaking away from him before he could again seize his sword, he gave a spur to his horse, who darted one side, which gave him time to draw his battle-axe, that hung from the saddle-bow, and with it he again bore down on his foe.

The good war-horse of Fieramosca, trained to every kind of

battle, began, with a light twitch of the bridle and a touch of the spur, to rear, like a ram preparing to butt, and leap forward, without retreating at any time so far as to put La Motte beyond the reach of his master. Struck with the intelligence the horse showed in every movement—"I have done well," thought Fieramosca, "to bring thee to the field." And so skilfully did he wield his battle-axe that he soon won upon the Frenchman the advantage he had lost.

The combat of these antagonists who might be considered the best of the two parties, if it was not to decide the fate of the battle, would, nevertheless, have decided the honor. It would have been too deep a disgrace for La Motte to be conquered, having been so bold in showing his contempt for his enemies; and a double glory to Ettore to be his victor. Fieramosca's companions well knowing his skill in such an engagement, abstained from taking any part in the struggle; and the French, too, extended no help to their champion—that after so much boasting, it might not be said he could not withstand, unaided, one of his foes. Consequently, without being conscious of it themselves, they all suspended their struggle, and fixed their eyes upon the two warriors.

In both of them, the thoughts alluded to, begot an inconceivable determination to conquer, and they fought with a wariness—an attention to commit no error—an alacrity to seize every advantage, that their struggle might be called a model

of the art of chivalry.

Diego Garcia di Paredes, who had passed his life in feats of arms, was amazed at the sight of so masterly a combat, and unable to rest any longer in his seat, he rose and walked to the last brow of the ridge that overlooked the arena, and gazed eagerly upon the spectacle. Seen from a distance, with his gigantic bust planted upon Herculian legs, and his arms hanging naturally at his sides, he seemed as immovable as a statue; but, to those near him, the contraction of his muscles under the tight buckskin dress he wore—the clenching of his fists, and more than all, the scintillation of his eyes, showed, too well how his blood boiled, and how deep was his mortification he could be there only as a spectator.

The motives that withheld the rest from disturbing the combat, either never entered the head, or were disregarded by Fanfulla, who, after leaving Sig. Prospero, went back to reconnoitre the field. He gave his horse the spur, and with his sword high in air, launched himself against La Motte. Ettore saw him coming, and cried out, "Back;" but this being not sufficient, he dashed his horse across the track of Fanfulla, and with the heel of his battle-axe, gave him a back-handed blow upon the breastplate, which forced him with a bad grace to retire.

"I'm enough for him, and even too much," he exclaimed, angrily.

This courteous act towards La Motte, was praised by all but Fanfulla, who broke out into one of those Italian exclamations which cannot be reduced to writing, half in jest and half in anger, he replied:

"Thy tongue is in thy hand."

Wheeling his horse, he dashed like a madman through his enemies, dealing out blows on all sides, without assailing any one in particular. After this momentary pause, the battle was again renewed, hotter than ever. From the beginning, Brancaleone, firm in his purpose, had aimed his lance at Grajano d'Asti, and fortune was equal between them. When they came to their swords, neither seemed to gain any advantage. Brancaleone was, perhaps, superior to his enemy in robustness, and even in skill; but the Piedmontese was renowned for parrying a blow, and he who understands this art, knows how much it is worth in battle.

Among the other combatants the victory was wholly undecided, and although the battle had lasted more than an hour and a half, it had, however, been so hot and obstinate, that it was very evident the men and the horses had need of a short repose, and it was conceded by the common consent of the judges. The trumpet gave the signal, and the king of arms entered the arena and separated the combatants.

That buzzing murmur we hear in our theatres immediately after the curtain falls on an act that has captivated the attention of the spectators, arose in like manner from the multitudes that pressed round the arena. The combatants returned to

their first position and dismounted—some took off their helmets to cool their brows and dry their sweat, and others who found their mail or the armor of their horses injured, tried to repair the spot. The steeds shook their heads and champed their bits to liberate themselves from the tight curbs; and feeling no longer their riders in the saddle, they planted firmly their legs, and lowering their heads, gave a prolonged shake which made all their armor ring. The hucksters around the field had rested their lungs, and now raised still louder cries than ever, and the two masters of the field spurred up their horses and went to meet their warriors.

One of the French being made a prisoner, and nearly all the rest either bruised or wounded, left a general opinion that the Italians, so far, had the best of the day; and, among all who had laid wagers on either side—those who had risked anything on the former, began to doubt the keenness of their foresight. The noble Bajardo had had too much experience in such matters not to be aware that the prospect of his side was growing dark. But, endeavoring to conceal his suspicion, he encouraged his fellow-countrymen—put them in order, reminding each one of the rules of the art—the strokes to be tried, and the means of defence.

Prospero Colonna, who saw his company had received less injury and had therefore less need of repose when the halfhour had expired, demanded that the battle be again renewed, and the judges gave the signal. The horses were still panting, but they raised their head when they felt the spurs, and rushing forward met once more in the shock of battle. Now the victory was to be decided in a few moments, and the silence and stillness of the spectators increased, with the desperation and fury of the combatants. The decorations of dress, the plumes and the ornaments, were flying in the air or dangling in dust and blood. From Ettore's side hung his azure scarf severed by a blow, his helmet was naked and battered, but wounded only lightly in the neck, he was as strong as ever. He again charged La Motte, against whom he was once more pitted. Fanfulla had in front of him Jacques de Guignes. Brancaleone had closed in once more with Grajano, advised of the way to touch his helmet, and the rest of his companions were dispersed around the field each one struggling with an enemy, and most of them with the battle-axe in hand which they wielded with surprising skill.

Suddenly a cry was raised among the spectators, and all, even to the combatants, turned to see the cause—the fight between Brancaleone and Grajano was finished. The latter was bent upon his horse's neck with his helmet and his skull cleft in twain, and the blood was rushing from the wound in such streams that it flowed from the openings of his visor, upon his arms down the legs of the horse who left tracks of blood. At last he fell to the ground and struck the sand like a bag of blacksmith's tools. Brancaleone brandished his bloody axe over his head, and with a terrible voice cried out:

"Viva Italia! and thus perish all renegade traitors." Proud of his triumph he pushed on, fiercely wielding his double-headed battle-axe, as he fell upon his enemies who were still making a vigorous defence, but the contest did not last long. The fall of Grajano seemed to turn the scale. Enraged at the long and obstinate defence of La Motte, Fieramosca redoubled the force of his blows and brought them down with such rapidity that he disconcerted and bewildered him. Deprived of his shield, with half a sword in his hand and his mail unrivetted and broken, he brought down so dreadful a stroke upon his head with his battle-axe that he brought him stunned to his saddle-bow and almost without the power of seeing.

Before he could recover, Fieramosca who was on his right side throwing his shield behind his shoulders, seized him with the left hand by the steel belts that bind the breastplate upon the shoulders, and pressing in his legs gave spurs to his horse. The steed launched forward and the French knight was dragged down from the saddle. When he fell to the ground, Fieramosca, who had seized his time, leaped from his horse and struck over his fellow adversary with his dagger unsheathed in his hand, and holding it over his eyes the point pressed lightly against his forehead, he cried, "Surrender, or thou art a dead man!" The baron still half unconscious, made no

reply, and his silence would have cost him his life had not Bajardo saved him by crying out, "Prisoner."

Having sent La Motte away to Sig. Prospero under the charge of his servants, Fieramosca turned to mount his saddle again, but his horse had disappeared. He cast a glance around the field and saw that Giraud de Forses, whose horse had been killed, had stolen the charger of the Italian, and was already among his companions, making head against his enemies. The brave Ettore knew that alone and on foot he could not regain his horse. He had nourished and brought him up with his own hand, and taught him to follow his voice, and he was not disturbed. Coming as near to him as possible he began to call him, stamping his foot, as he was accustomed to do when he gave him his grain. The horse started to obey the call, and the knight reining him in, the noble animal first began to prance, then leaped forward, and in spite of his rider's attempts to restrain or to guide him, he dashed with him into the midst of the Italians, who surrounded him, and had their prisoner without the stroke of a sword. When he dismounted, Ettore sprung to his back, while the Frenchman was cursing his fortune. But his captor returned him his sword, which had been taken from him, saying:

"God help thee, brother; take thy arms and return among thy friends, for our prisoners we have by force of arms, and

not by jugglers' tricks."

The Frenchman, who expected anything else but this, was overwhelmed with astonishment. He thought a moment, and

then replied-

"If I do not yield to your arms, I do to your courtesy," and taking his sword by the middle of the blade, he went and laid it at the feet of Signor Prospero, and it was remarked by all who had praised the courteous act of Fieramosca, that the French knight had acted nobly too, and made a generous reply. For this reason he alone was dismissed without paying his ransom.

The French party was now stripped of four of its bravest swords, while the Italians still counted their thirteen mounted men, and it may easily be imagined how the day was likely to end. Notwithstanding five Frenchmen were unhorsed, they clustered together, and flanking themselves with two mounted knights on either side, they prepared to make another stand against the Italians, who gathering now the third time made a charge once more upon their adversaries.

No one supposed they could withstand the shock, but admiring the firmness and skill of these brave men, an anxious curiosity increased among the spectators, to see the result of this last defence, and there was hardly one among that multitude who did not feel that they were obliged, in withstanding the fury of the charge against such dreadful odds, to rush into the extremest peril. But the French had no such fears—bruised, wounded, covered with dust and blood, they still presented a bold and sublime spectacle, unflinchingly awaiting the ruin those horses must bring, for it seemed they would grind them to powder.

At last the Italians started, but not with their former swiftness, for their horses were worn down with fatigue, and many of their mouths were covered with bloody foam. The knights raised the cry, *Viva Italia* louder than ever, and drove in their spurs, but their bleeding steeds only mounted to a slow gallop. Notwithstanding the laws proclaimed in the beginning, so wild was the mania that transported the crowd at that dreadful moment, the circle they formed around the area was fast diminishing. The guards stationed to preserve order, more anxious even than the rest, followed the concentric movement.

In the centre of the line newly formed by the Italians, was stationed Fieramosca, who had the best horse, and at his sides those least exhausted or swifter of foot. In this last charge upon their foes the centre advanced in the form of a wedge, with Ettore for a leader. This order was so well preserved, that when they reached their destination they dashed through the French file almost without opposition. But now the struggle began, more clustered and more terrible than ever. To the number, the valor, and the skill of the Italians, were opposed efforts more than human,—desperation,

and the enraged mortification of imminent and inevitable dishonor.

The brave and unfortunate French knights, in the midst of a cloud of dust, fell bleeding under the hoofs of the horses—they raised themselves up again, clinging to the stirrups and bridles of their victors—again they fell, exhausted, bruised, crushed, rolled one upon another, half disarmed, their mail torn off, and yet struggling to recover, seizing up from the ground fragments of swords, broken lances, and even stones, to retard the defeat.

Ettore was the first to raise the cry for them to give up the contest, and surrender prisoners; but it was scarcely heard in the din of the battle, or if it were, they refused by their actions to yield, mutely suffering those horrible strokes, and mad with fury, they still made their astonishing defence. Of the four who were in the saddle when this last engagement begun, one had been unhorsed and was fighting on foot, two had had their horses killed, and the fourth was surrounded and made prisoner. It would be impossible to describe all the strange incidents, the blows, the desperate deeds that filled up these last moments. They left among the spectators, for many years, a recollection of wonder and of horror.

De Liaye, to cite a single case, was seen clinging by two hands to the rein of Capoccio Romano, to dismount him, if possible, or seize the bridle from his hand. The horse stamped him under his fore feet, but he could not rid him of the French knight, who was dragged in this manner across the field to Signor Prospero, and many hands and great strength were necessary to unclench his grasp and put him among the prisoners, he was so transported with desperation. At last, it became so horrible, it seemed too cruel even to the Italians themselves, to follow up the battle. Fieramosca's cry was taken up by others, and they all ceased their fighting at once, shouting to the few remaining madmen, *Prisoners—Prisoners*.

A murmur was now heard among the people, which increased in spite of the heralds, and they clamored, and groaned, and hissed, for the combat to be arrested, and the French saved Breaking through the lines, the multitude crowded around the combatants, who were shut up in an area of only thirty or forty paces. Some were shouting, others waving handkerchiefs and hats, hoping in this way to bring the battle to an end, while others turned to the judges and masters of the field. Signor Prospero pressed forward through the crowd and raised his voice and his rod, and implored the French to surrender. And Bajardo, although he felt pained at the unhappy fate of his companions, saw that all further effort was useless, and feeling it was unjust to stand by and see such brave men pour out their blood so hopelessly, dashed through the crowd and cried out to his countrymen to give over the contest, and yield themselves prisoners.

But neither his nor any other voice was heeded by the vanquished combatants, who seemed no longer to bear any resemblance to men, for they appeared more like demons and unchained furies. At last the Judges descended from the tribunal and approached the scene of blood, causing the trumpets to be sounded, and proclaiming in a loud voice the Italians had conquered. The latter then wished to retire from the field, but it was in vain. Their antagonists, so drunken with fury and the pain of their bleeding wounds, they could neither hear nor comprehend, still fought on, like tigers bound in the folds of a serpent, and tried still to seize hold of their victorious foes.

Diego Garcia at last, seeing there was no other way, entered the melé, and throwing himself upon the shoulders of Sacet de Jacet, who had closed in with Brancaleone with the vain hope of wrenching his battle-axe from his hand, just as the Italian Hercules was preparing a final blow for his skull that would have laid him dead; and grasping him with gigantic power, in spite of his resistance, dragged him from the combat. His example was imitated by a number of the spectators, and in a moment they had surrounded and fallen upon the combatants, and although they did not escape blows and bruises, and tearing of clothes, they at last succeeded, after a hard struggle, in bearing these five or six half insane men from the arena. And although they still clamored wildly for their foes, they were stationed under the oaks, with their fellow prisoners.

The combat was no sooner over than Fieramosca mounted

his horse and rode up to the point where Grajano d'Asti still lay on the spot where he had fallen. When Brancaleone's fatal blow fell, the generous heart of Ettore could not suppress an emotion of joy. But hardly was it come before it was crushed by a sublime and virtuous reflection. He approached, and clearing away the crowd around, he knelt over him. The blood was still flowing from the deep wound, but slow and clotted. With the greatest care he gradually raised his head, as he would have done in trying to save his best friend, and removed his helmet. But the battle-axe had penetrated the skull and sunk deep into the brain—the knight was dead! With a sigh which came up from the bottom of his heart, Ettore laid the head of the dead man again on the ground, and standing once more on his feet, he said to his companions, who had also gathered around, and more particularly to Brancaleone:

"That weapon of thine" (pointing to the axe he held in his hand, still reeking with blood) has done this day, a deed of eternal justice. But how can we enjoy such a victory? The blood that stains this ground is it not Italian blood? And could not he so gallant, and so brave in war, have spilt it for our glory and his own, against a common foe? The tomb of Grajano would then have been honored, and glorious, and his memory an example of honor. But now, he has fallen in infamy, and upon his ashes will weigh the curse of the traitors of their country." *

They all now returned silent, and sad, to their horses. The corpse was that evening borne to Barletta, but when they went to deposit it in the consecrated ground, the people rose in turbulent masses to prohibit it. The undertaker then carried it to the bed of a torrent two miles from the city, dug a hole and threw it in; and for ever from that day, that place was

called "The Traitor's Pass."

Signor Prospero, before setting out from the field, turned to Bajardo, and asked if he would then ransom his companions The bragadocio of La Motte had been listened to by Bajardo. He made no reply. The Judges decreed that the prisoners must follow their conquerors to Barletta. They started on

foot, silent, mortified, surrounded by a vast multitude; and the Italians followed them upon their battle steeds, to the music of instruments, with cries of "Viva Italia! Viva Colonna!"

They reached the castle, and the thirteen warriors mounted to the grand hall, and presented their twelve prisoners to Gonzales, who was waiting for them in state with all his Barons. After a generous eulogium upon the victors, he turned to the French knights, and thus addressed them :-

"I would never insult brave men under the frowns of fortune. The fate of arms is fluctuating, and he who is vanquished today, may come off victorious to-morrow. I will not charge you henceforth to respect Italian valor-after what you have seen to-day such words would be superfluous. But still I will advise you, from this hour for ever, to honor valor and courage wherever you find them, remembering that God has distributed them among all men, without limiting them to you, as the privilege of your nation, and that true courage is adorned with modesty, and never contaminated by boasting."

After these few words they were dismissed. They all left the

it to the bed of a rought two miles from the city, dug a hole

must follow their conquerors to Barletta. They started on

hall together, and thus ended that glorious day.

CONCLUSION.

All those who narrate, or write a story (we are sincere) have always a secret spark of hope that it may delight, that it may find some one who will listen to it, or read it to the end. Even we have treasured up in a corner of the heart this same hope, which like the flame of a candle exposed to the draft, at times flares up (let the reader laugh if he pleases), and then dies away till it is almost extinguished. But our self-love has sheltered the flickering spark thus far, and it burns on still.

If this subtle flatterer has not deceived us—if we have really found a reader with patience enough to accompany us thus far, we may hope he will still desire to hear something more of the fate of Fieramosca, and we will gladly give him all the

intelligence we possess.

When Gonzales had dismissed the victors, and the prisoners, the latter were taken to the house of Colonna, where they were hospitably entertained for the night. The day following, their ransom-money was brought from the French camp, and they were liberated, and accompanied by crowds till they passed the gate, with all those demonstrations of honor they had so nobly merited by their valiant defence.

But no sooner had Fieramosca gone out from the presence of the Great Captain, than all thought of them was banished from his mind. He could at last think of himself, and of Ginevra, and quietly withdrawing from his companions, who, surrounded by a crowd of friends, could think of nothing else in the intoxicating joy of victory, and paid no attention to him. He saw Vittoria Colonna at the bottom of the terrace of the court-yard: she had been present when Gonzales received the thirteen warriors, and returning again, was now just enter-

ing her room. He ran towards her, and calling her name, she stopped, and turned round in the threshold. She had heard a part of Fieramosca's adventures, and she readily fancied the object of his curiosity.

"Oh God! what shall I tell him?" she said to herself; but she had no time for reflection, for Ettore was already at her side. His armor was all covered with blood, and unrivetted in various places where blows had fallen. Only one plume was left on his helmet; nothing remained of the rest but the bare stems. His raised visor exposed his beautiful countenance, worn with fatigue, bathed with sweat, and yet, full of joy for the victory won, and of anxiety to find her, whom after the death of Grajano, he could finally call his own.

As the human heart is inclined to hope, or to fear, according to the circumstances that surround it, the despondency, and I might say, the desperation he had felt the previous night, and the morning of the battle, thinking of Ginevra, now by the physical and moral shock of that dreadful struggle on the field, with the irrepressible joy of having conquered, had changed into a confident hope of finding her well and safe.

"My lady," he said, speaking with a violent palpitation, "God reward and bless thee. I know all, * * that you recovered her, that you have done everything right, * * poor creature, * * and it was necessary, * * take me to her—let us go for the love of God!"

Every word of the young knight went like the point of a knife to the heart of Vittoria, and she had not courage to tell him the dreadful news; but composing her countenance, she gathered strength to say, with a half smile:—

"Ginevra is once more at St. Ursula" (it was too true, for an hour before the return of the Italians from the camp, she had been borne to the convent, attended by the friar Mariano, to bury her in the night).

"At St. Ursula, what? so quick! then she has not been sick! Then she is well!

"Yes, she is well."

Fieramosca opened his arms as if to embrace Vittoria, so wild was his joy. But instead, he dropped a knee to the ground,

and taking her hand, he stamped kisses of gratitude upon it, worth more than a thousand words.

Then rising, almost out of himself, he started off to fly to St. Ursula. But he stopped a moment, looked at his breast, and turned back. "See Signora," said he, smiling and trembling with joy. "Look at this azure scarf—she made it for me, * * to day a sword struck it as it was hanging over my breast-plate, and cut it in two."

As he said this, he untied the knot he had made with the

two ends, to keep it from falling.

"I am too bold, I know, but would you have the kindness to join it again, so that Ginevra would not observe it had been cut. She would—dear creature—think it was a bad omen. * * She would say * * "thou did'st not know enough to protect it with thy shield."

Vittoria went willingly to her room to get what was necessary in doing it, glad to escape one moment from the young knight, to hide her agitation in seeing his fatal assurance. She returned somewhat calmer, and sitting down to unite the scarf, with her face lowered, Fieramosca was unconscious of her struggle.

"Hardly," said he, smiling, as she worked on, "hardly could we tell what color it was * * * it has seen strange fortunes * * * it has been my companion in dark days, and now it shall see brighter ones with me. Do you know for how many years I have always kept it by me? * * * I have saved it from many a battle—and to-day! * * * when all my sorrows are turned into gladness, they have spoiled it for me—what would a believer in auguries say?"

Vittoria went on sewing without answering a word. Struggling between the thought that she must reveal to him the truth, and the invincible repugnance she felt to give him so dreadful a blow, she thought she would take council with Brancaleone, immediately after Ettore left her, and prepare him

to stand by his friend in this terrible hour.

"I thank you a thousand times," said Ettore, when the work was done; and rushing down the stair-way, in a moment he was in the court-yard. No one was left but his servant

Masuccio, who held by the bridle his horse, still covered with foam. The poor beast's head was down, his eye hollow, and his sides were still beating rapidly.

"To the stable, to the stable!" cried out Ettore to the groom, as he dashed by him. "Who is thy teacher? A sweating horse still in the open air!" And he rushed out of the court-yard, and went towards the gate that looked in the direction of St. Ursula. The passage was shorter by the sea. He reached the point where the boats were kept, but there was not one to be found. The ships which bore the recruits that had arrived from Spain had cast anchor in the port. Wishing the troops to disembark before night, every boat had been taken into this service. Ettore stamped his feet with impatience, and then said, "I'll go on horseback—it's a little longer, but let it be so!" And he went to the stable; Masuccio was just taking the bridle from Airone.

"Leave it on him," said Fieramosca; and snatching it from his hand, he threw it over his neck, and leaping into the saddle, he was in a few moments out of the city, on the road that winds along the shore to the convent.

"Poor Airone!" he said, patting him on his neck, and quickening the trot by striking his heels into the sides of his good steed, who found it hard to be forbidden the stall after so much fatigue. "Thou art right; but have patience a little longer, and I will repay thee well."

In the meantime night was fast approaching, and the sun had been down half an hour. Riding on towards the east, Fieramosca had behind his back the clear and serene sky, and before him the sun; the heavens covered by long dark clouds which settled in a streak along the horizon. These clouds were discharging as they happened to be, more or less dense bodies of rain upon the line of the sea, and the peaks of these cloudmasses which rose almost into the zenith, still caught the last gleams of twilight which colored them with a pale light. In the midst of the blackness, the lightnings were tremulously, almost incessantly, gleaming, and the deep thunder rolled from the distance over the sea. The sea was rising and threatening—heaving and almost black-beaten, the white foam was curl-

ing from the tops of the low trees, and along the beach the waters came more and more heavily in long swellings, green and transparent, like walls of glass, and over their own verges they fell curling below, as they dashed angrily with their white foam upon the dry sand of the shore.

But the lowering storm had no power at that moment to ruffle the bright spirit of the young knight. With an impatient eye he measured the distance that divided him from St. Ursula, and the shore was so bare and open he could see all the beach. He fancied the ecstacy of the first sight of Ginevra—he saw her coming to meet him with all that earnest innocence of countenance, moving in grace and beauty. He hoped to reach the convent in time to be the first to bring her news of the victory, and he only thought now of the best way he could tell her she was at last free to dispose of her own hand.

When he was within two shots of an arquebuse of the tower, the east wind, beating against his face, had brought on the storm; large drops came sweeping down, which struck his cuirass and dashed off in spray, and they fell every moment faster and thicker. A thunderbolt fell, which seemed to bring with it a cataract from heaven that bathed Fieramosca from head to foot before he could pass the short distance that separated him from the tower. The gate was still open; he dashed through it like an arrow, and in a moment he was on the island, at the door of the stranger's house. Tying his horse to an iron ring which was partly protected from the storm by the roof, four leaps brought him to Ginevra's room. It is needless to say he found it empty. He descended again, and at first, thought he would seek for her in the church. He knew it was her custom to go to a gallery to pray-he entered and cast a glance there, it was empty—the church was empty, and almost entirely dark. He could not see a person in the choir, and yet he heard a low chanting, which seemed to come up from below. He went forward, and saw that from the grating before the main altar, which looked down into the subterranean chapel, a light was streaming which struck upon the ceiling above, in a circular discolored form-when he approached it, he heard them reciting below the prayers for the

dead. He walked round the altar and descended. The rattling of his armor and spurs, and the clank of his sword upon the steps, startled the circle gathered around the little chapel; the circle opened—at their feet he beheld the bier he had seen that morning in the sacristy of St. Dominico; before him on the side of the altar, the friar Mariano in surplice, and the habit for the dead, holding in his extended hand the holy water—in the centre an open tomb—on one side two men supporting an upright stone; on the other Zoraide on her knees, bending over the body of Ginevra, which had already been lowered beneath; she was composing the veil upon her face, and laying a crown of white roses upon her forehead.

Ettore reached the pavement, and stood gazing, immovable, without speaking a word—without making a motion—or moving his eyelids. Slowly his face became as rigid and pallid as a corpse, then his lips showed a convulsive tremor, and large drops of cold sweat rolled down from his forehead. The sobs of Zoraide were redoubled, and friar Mariano, with a tremulous voice which told but too well how the sight of the wretched

young knight lacerated his heart-could only say-

"Yesterday she took her flight to Heaven, and she is now more blessed with God than she could be with us." * * But tears choked the good friar's utterance, and he was silent. The stone moved by iron bars again found its place and fell

upon the tomb.

Ettore still stood motionless. Friar Mariano approached him, took his hand which hung lifeless, embraced him and turned him round to leave the place, and Ettore obeyed. They mounted the stairway and went forth from the church. The lightnings, the thunder peals, the rain in torrents still continued. When they reached the steps of the stranger's house, Fieramosca tore himself away from the embrace of the friar, and before he could utter a single word he was bending over the neck of his horse, his spurs were plunged deep into his rowels and his rapid steps echoed under the gate of the tower.

No friend of Fieramosca, no living soul of those times ever saw him afterwards living or dead. Various conjectures were made about his fate, but they were all vain and uncertain. One alone savored of probability, and it was this.

Some poor mountaineers of Gargano, who were tending their coal-pits, related to the peasants (and thus from mouth to mouth the story at last reached Barletta after the Spanish camp had broken up), that one night in the midst of a wild storm they had seen a strange vision of an armed knight, on the peaks of some inaccessible rocks that overhung a steep declivity near the sea. At first a few only reported the vision, but the number increased, and at last the whole country around adopted the firm belief it was the archangel S. Michael.

But when this reached the ears of friar Mariano, and he had calculated the time it was seen, he thought it might rather have been Fieramosca, who, driven wild, had spurred his horse up those difficult passes, at last plunged with him into the sea.

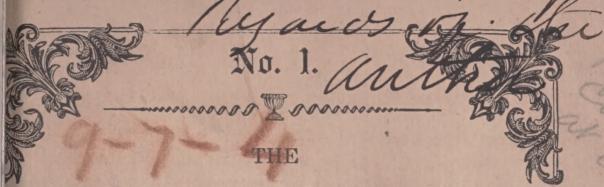
In the year 1616, a tract of rocky sea shore, under M. Gargano had been left bare by the retreating of the sea. A fisherman found lying between the rocks a heap of iron, almost consumed by the marine salt and by rust, underneath he found human bones and the carcass of a horse. The reader may now draw his own conclusion—for us, our story is done.

To dream its merits may win for it public favor would be a vain and ridiculous hope, but we think we may be allowed to hope that the Italians will accept with amiable indulgence the good will of him who recals to them a fact in their histery which does them so much honor. We have not felt ourselves at liberty to introduce incidents at the expense of the vanquished for the sake of heightening the valor of the victors, for such incidents would be rebuked by Giorio, Guicciardini, and other writers who speak of this fact. It was not our wish to do injury to the valor of the French, which we are ready to acknowledge and to praise, but only to make that of the Italians known, and in accomplishing our purpose we had no need of departing from history, whose records had done us perfect justice. For this reason we may be allowed to say how direful we feel that contention to be, which in-

flames men of different nations to those hostile charges which are often embittered by falsehoods, faults and crimes, show how noble an office is it in one who wishes well to his race, to that law of love and of justice proclaimed in the gospel, to plant his foot upon those flames of jealousy and hatred which have so long desolated the world.

But what shall we say of the mutual animosities, still more degrading and sacriligious, that have so often and so long raged between the various parties of the same nation? Too true it is that Italy cannot ward off this imputation of shame and dishonor which in nothing else has been cast upon her glory even by an enemy. And although these animosities have been and always will be more and more deplored and cursed, the time is yet far distant when the reproach heaped upon us shall be equal to our crime.

It seems to us, therefore, that although the writer who records once more one of those deplorable facts in which our history too much abounds, may imperfectly execute a lofty task, he will not have labored in vain. It seems to us besides, that his sentence of reproof will be esteemed more sincere and prove more effective when he visits it upon that part of Italy where he was born, for otherwise his judgment might have an air of partiality, and seem to have been swayed, in some measure, by that debasing sectional envy he wished to reproach. For this reason we think that a man born in Piedmont may more appropriately than any one else, heap upon the memory of Grajano d'Asti the dishonor that ought to cover his tomb.



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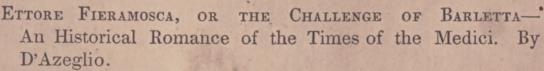


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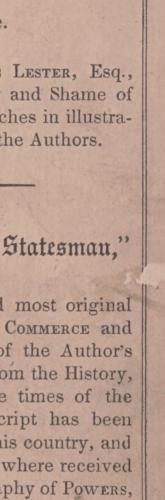
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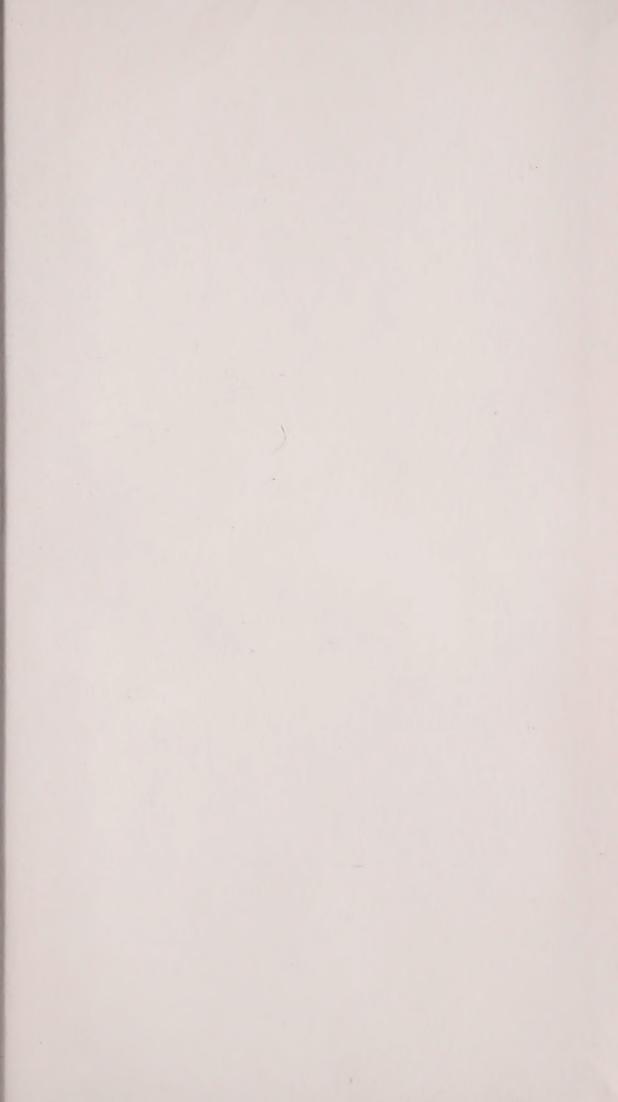
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